

Working with 21st Century Adolescents and Families

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Adolescence: 12 to Adulthood

APA Stress in America Survey. Teens report stress similar to adults, exceeding levels seen as healthy.

½ of all adult mental health disorders began during adolescence.

6 billion a year incarcerating adolescents.

8% of high school students attempt suicide. Same as 20 years ago.

No gains in scores of standardized tests of high school achievement since the 70's.

20% of high school age boys take meds for ADHD, double the prevalence of ADHD in that population.

BRAIN

Adolescent plasticity as important as 0-3.

Developmental plasticity of the prefrontal cortex during adolescence is a critical period.

Adolescents have a more sensitive amygdala.

Higher levels of Dopamine released in response to experience explains why everything feels better as an adolescent.

Risk taking is a result of Dopamine and immature prefrontal cortex.

3 Developmental Phases of Adolescence.

1. "Start Your Engines" (12-14)
2. "Developing a Better Brake System" (15-17)
3. "Skilled Driver Behind the Wheel." (18+)

3 Key Principles for Healthy Adolescent Development

1. Adolescents need developmentally appropriate autonomy and connection with peers.
2. Adolescents need adult mentorship and connection with their parents.
3. Adolescents need appropriate challenge and novelty.

PARENTS

Laurence Steinberg Longitudinal Study: 200 families. 40% of parents suffered a decline in mental health when their first child entered adolescence. Rejection, low self-worth a decline in sex lives and increases in physical symptoms of distress were also reported.

2 Key Principles to Guide the Work with Parents

1. Parents need our empathy and tools.

2. Parents need to strengthen their relationship to self and others.

THERAPY

1. Curiosity and Empathy.
2. Maintain Emotional Safety.

Meet with parents first and as needed throughout.

1st Session

Establish an alliance.

Begin process of reframing and psychoeducation

Clarify confidentiality.

Set expectations for sessions.

Move out of shame and into guilt and growth.

On Going Sessions.

Evaluate progress.

Address coparenting challenges.

Support implementation of strategies and tools.

Clarify misunderstandings.

Meeting With Teens

Model honesty and openness.

Be affected by them.

Teach them how to use therapy.

Teach and practice mindfulness.

Show interest in their details.

Provide opportunities for them to practice.

Teach them stuff.

Meeting with Families.

Set the tone.

Emphasize process and dynamics.

Build empathy.

Practice problem solving.

Model healthy communication.

Empower kids and support parents.

Recommended Further Reading

Age of Opportunity- Laurence Steinberg

The Teenage Brain - Frances Jensen

Brainstorm - Daniel Siegal

Attachment Focused Family Therapy - Daniel Hughes