

# Understanding your Teenager

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# Our talk will cover...

- Teenage development
- The teenage brain
- Typical teenage behaviour
- Tips for you as parents



# Teenage Development

## Independence

Individual  
identity

Formation of  
new  
relationships  
with family  
members

## Cognition and learning

Capacity for  
abstract thought

## Social skills

In relation to  
peers

Intimate  
relationships

## Puberty

Hormonal and  
physical changes

Increased  
sexuality



# Discussion

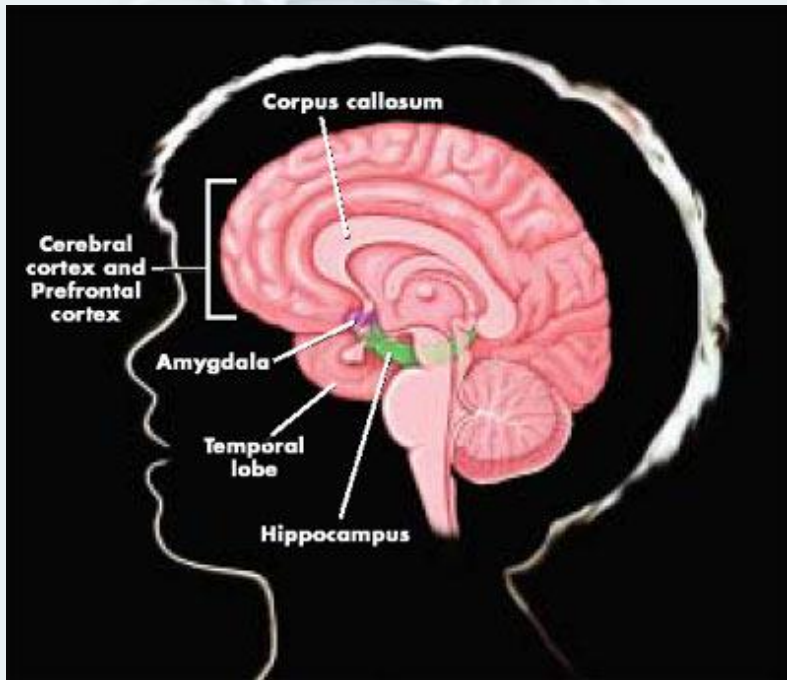
Turn to the person next to you:  
What do you remember about your  
teenage years?



# The Teenage Brain

Key points:

- **The brain is still developing**  
(different thought processes, vulnerability to both good and bad experiences e.g. alcohol)
- **‘Use it or loose it’** (connections associated with interests/activities)
- Areas involved in **emotional, automatic responses** develop faster than those involved in reasoned, rational responses.





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# Typical Teenage Behaviour

- Rebelling and defiance
- Novelty-seeking and risk-taking
- Importance of the peer group increases
- Self-consciousness, particularly about body
- Emotionally reactivity
- Changing sleep patterns – lie-ins!

This is all normal!



# When we become more concerned...

- More extreme risk-taking (e.g. drugs and alcohol abuse, promiscuity)
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm
- Anxiety that has an impact of daily functioning

Questions when considering  
e.g. typical teenage risk-taking  
or something more  
problematic

- Why do you think they are engaging in the behaviour? (E.g. 'it's fun, I enjoy it' or...low self-esteem, need for validation)
- How much control do they have? (signs of addiction?)
- Impact on day to day functioning



# How to help your teenager

- Keeping lines of communication open
  - Showing an interest, asking their opinion
  - Talking at meal-times, in the car
  - Talking to their friends
  - Use text, e-mail, instant messaging
  - Taking away phone may not be helpful



# How to help your teenager

Balance between boundaries and negotiation

- Firm boundary area (not up for negotiation, e.g. relating to safety)
  - Give explanations instead of just issuing demands
  - State your own opinions and views clearly
  - Try to avoid judging, preaching, criticizing and blaming
- Margin areas (open to negotiation)
  - e.g. curfew, experimentation with hair colour, piercings
  - Support your child in considering the different factors (e.g. impact on others, consequences...)



# Further ideas

- Noticing and commenting on positives
- Taking steps to 'repair' relationship following a conflict – remind them that you love them
- Talking to other parents
- Helpful websites...



# If you are still worried

about any of the issues we have discussed today  
you can get in contact with your child's:

- Head of year
- Form-tutor
- Student support
- GP



# Websites

- For parents:

[www.familylives.org](http://www.familylives.org)

[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk) – helpful tips on talking to YP about the risks

[www.yourteenager.co.uk](http://www.yourteenager.co.uk)

- For teenagers:

[www.thesite.org](http://www.thesite.org)

- Internet safety:

[www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

