

THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN

WHAT'S GOING ON?

PREFRONTAL CORTEX

The rational brain - responsible for thinking, reasoning and logic, is not fully developed.



AMYGDALA

The emotional brain - responsible for emotions like anger, happiness and sadness, is well developed.

ADOLESCENCE IS A TIME OF INTENSE RAPID LEARNING & BRAIN DEVELOPMENT PERIOD OF VULNERABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

During adolescence, connections between neurons (brain cells) are developing and changing

OPPORTUNITY

The brain is undergoing important changes to its circuits...

PRUNATION - unused connections in the thinking part of the brain disappear if they are not used

MYELINATION - neurons are protected and strengthened by a protective material

SPROUTING - nerve endings are trying to reach out and make connections with other neurons

VULNERABILITY

During these changes in the brain young people are...

Motivated by social interaction

Prone to risk taking behaviour

Orientated towards short term gain

Negatively impacted by stress

Likely to display emotional rather than rational responses as the cortex is still developing

What a young person does and is exposed to during this critical time in life, has a large influence on their future. Experience and current needs shape the pruning, myelination and sprouting processes of the brain.

WHAT DO WE DO AS TEACHERS AND PARENTS?

Teachers use strategies to ensure engagement, use of memory and ignite the spark for curiosity and learning in and out of the classroom.

They aim to build resilience in learning by maximising the potential of the teenage brain.

They foster 'safe classrooms' where young people feel confident to learn and support students' emotional regulation by employing positive behaviour strategies.



As a parent/carer you can support your child by:

Limiting stress for your child, support risk taking within healthy boundaries, encourage good sleeping patterns and teach good nutrition, help regulate emotional responses with support, encourage discussion about learning, relate subjects at school to the real world and their futures.



For more information, you may visit
www.unicef-irc.org/adolescent-brain
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0O1u5OEc5eY>

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