

Teenage Years

Information for Parents

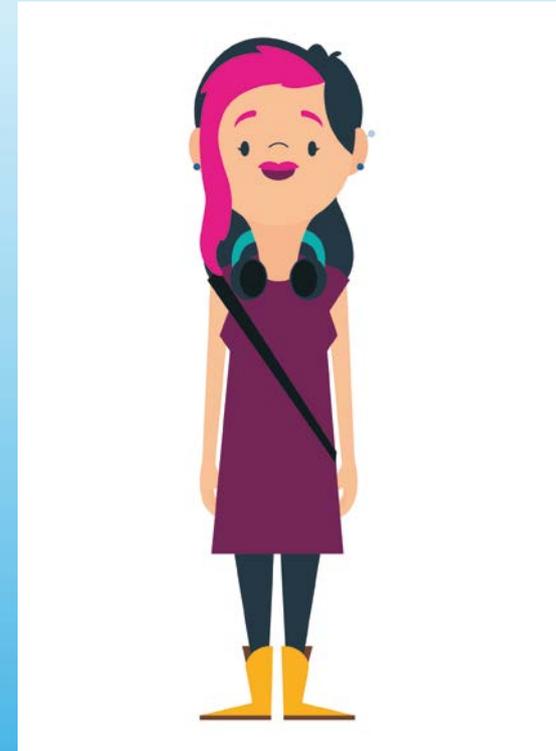
or anyone who cares for or works
with young people

A Time of Change

Between the ages of 12 – 19 years, young people go through a period of physical and emotional change as they go through adolescence.

Alongside this, they can start to experience increased anxiety because of exams, how they look and friendships.

To help support young people through their teenage years parents might need to adapt to the changing needs of their child.

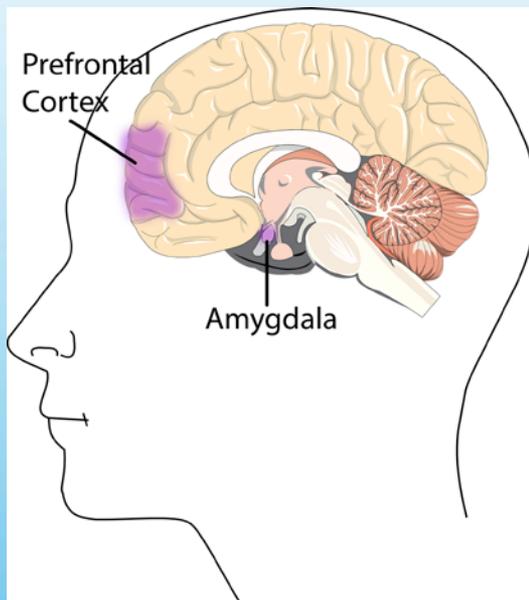


The Teenage Brain

- **During the teenage years the brain goes through a huge amount of re-modelling.**
- **It is made up of thousands of pathways that carry the information we need to think and function.**
- **In adolescence, the brain becomes more finely tuned so any unused pathways are pruned away and others are strengthened.**



The Teenage Brain



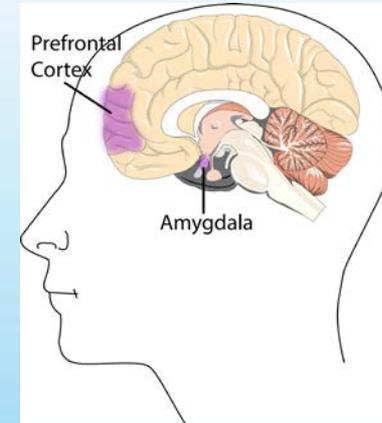
- **A lot of this pruning happens at the back of the brain whereas the front part, called the pre-frontal cortex, develops last.**
- **The pre-frontal cortex is the part of the brain we use to plan and think things through.**
- **The pre-frontal cortex also helps us to regulate emotions**

The Teenage Brain

Because the pre-frontal cortex is the last part of the brain to be pruned, when it comes to making decisions, young people often rely on a part of the brain called the amygdala.

This part of the brain is designed to help us survive so is much more responsive to emotions, impulses and aggression.

The amygdala is the part of the brain that activates a 'fight' or 'flight' response when we are in danger.

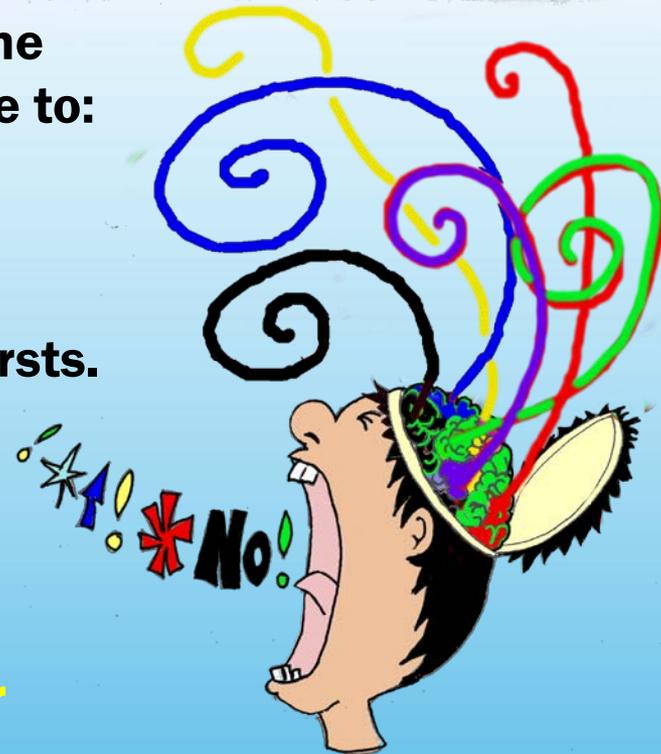


The Teenage Brain

All this brain development means that during the teenage years young people may be more prone to:

- riskier behaviour
- act impulsively
- and be more likely to have emotional outbursts.

This doesn't mean that young people shouldn't be held responsible for their actions but it helps explain some of the behaviour that adults find difficult.



Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of young people

Give them a chance to say what they are

feeling Discussing emotions such as anger, fear or sadness means that young people are less likely to project them through challenging behaviour. Feelings are normal, it's what we do with them that matters!

Give them Space Don't take it personally if your young person suddenly wants to be alone or chooses to spend more time with friends instead of doing family stuff.

They need space and time to explore all the changes that are taking place as they head towards independence.

Find ways to be available when they have worries or concerns. They still need you!

Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of young people

Give them boundaries

Teenagers still need limits around what they do and where they go.

It can be hard to keep boundaries in place but young people actually feel a lot safer if they know where they stand and what's allowed.

Involve them in discussions when setting rules. If they feel part of the plan they are more likely to keep to it.



Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of young people

Help them to feel good about who they are

Teenagers will want to explore their identity and might become more concerned about the way they look. They may feel pressure to look a certain way because of what they see in the media and from friends.

Find ways to make them feel happy and special about who they are and listen out for signs that they are unhappy about their appearance.

Seek support if you have concerns.

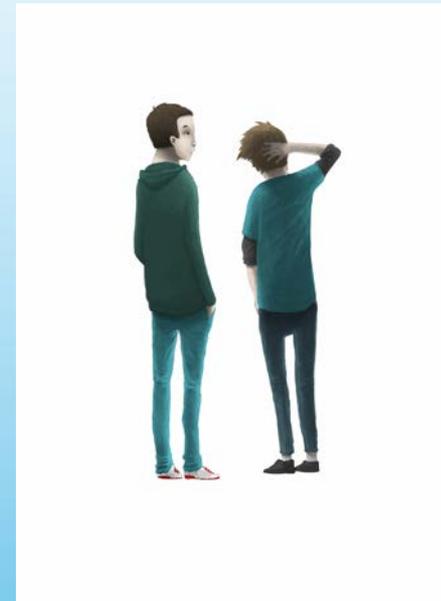


Supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of young people

Communication

Positive relationships are often based on good communication so try to find opportunities to listen and talk to together.

Tune in to what they are saying. Sometimes just being there and listening is enough.



If conversations start to get heated, take a long, deep breath before you respond.

Young people are more likely to stay calm if you are calm.

Local Support and Resources

Schools and Parent and Family Support Advisors (PFSAs)

Schools provide valuable support. This includes Parent and Family Support Advisors who offer one-to-one advice, parenting support and provide links to other services.

The Parent Toolkit

A local information portal developed by practitioners and parents – it covers all the main topics that parents get concerned about and also provides information about online and local training programmes for parents. www.cypsomersethealth.org

National Organisations

Time to Change www.time-to-change.org.uk/parents

Talking with your teenager about mental health

Family Lives www.familylives.org.uk

Parenting and family support

MindED for Families www.minded.org.uk

Top tips and advice for worried parents

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents

Parent helpline and information portal