

Quick Notes: Puberty- what parents should expect and when to seek support for adolescent changes

Understanding the Preadolescent/teenage Brain

- Different areas of the brain mature at different rates.
- For youth, one of the **first** areas of the brain to develop is the **amygdala** or the **emotional center**
- **One of the last to develop is the Frontal Lobe (at about age 24)**
 - This houses the prefrontal cortex which is responsible for **reasoning, problem solving, judgement, and impulse control**
 - This means our youth are **more likely** to respond to situations with their **emotion center** than use their reasoning or problem solving skills and may find it difficult to control impulses associated with those emotional reactions (yelling, crying, throwing things, avoidance out of worry, etc.).
 - In other words, they may react to the **same situations that we would react to as adults**, they just may not make choices that we feel would be logical or reasonable for the situation because the part of the brain that controls that is still under construction.
- “Typical” vs “Atypical” teen behavior
 - These two words are in quotes because what is considered typical can vary greatly by factors like the culture, values, and experiences of the immediate and extended family, regional differences in beliefs or outlook, and the larger political climate

Typical Changes	May be red flags
Changes in appearance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitting in is important, as fashion trends change, so will their interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in appearance + school problems (like failing grades, increase in disciplinary referrals, self-harm, extreme weight loss or gain)
Increased arguments and rebellious behavior	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this stage, youth are looking for more independence which includes thinking for themselves and making their own decisions. This may also include exploring the values they grew up with and deciding whether they also want to prioritize the same values in their own lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalation of the arguments (intensity of the argument) • Violence at home • Skipping school • Getting into fights • Police involvement
Mood Swings	
Hormones and developmental changes mean your preteen and teens may experience mood swings, irritable behavior, and struggle to manage emotions	Any of that accompanied by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep problems or persistent sadness may be indicators of depression
More influenced by their friends than by their parents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teens want to fit in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden change in peer group

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are looking for acceptance from peers • This may mean pulling away from family but they still need and want your love and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New friends are encouraging negative behavior • Refusing to comply with reasonable rules and boundaries • Avoiding consequences of bad behavior by lying • Spending too much time alone.
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What can Parents do to help with this transition and stay connected?

1. Connect with your teen
 - a. Be aware of your own stress levels
 - b. Be there for them
 - c. Find common ground
 - d. Listen without judging or giving advice
 - e. Expect rejection, but still stick around
2. Make healthy lifestyle changes
 - a. Create structure in your regular routine
 - b. Reduce screen time
 - c. Encourage exercise
 - d. Eat right
 - e. Ensure your child gets enough sleep
3. Take care of yourself- they will learn to care for themselves and manage their own emotional responses by watching how you do. You can teach kids how to manage their own emotions by
 - a. Establishing rules and consequences that you adhere to
 - b. Uncover what is behind the emotional outbursts
 - c. Be aware of warning sign and triggers for your child (i.e. situations that make them nervous, angry, sad, or scared) . Teach them to notice those signs also.
 - d. Help your child find healthy ways to relieve that anger, sadness, anxiety, and fear.
 - e. Give your teen space to retreat (90 mins for an overstimulated-under regulated brain to get back to a state where listening can happen, keep this in mind when insisting on immediately addressing situations).
 - f. Manage your own overwhelming emotions so they can see how to do it. It may also be useful to talk through what you are doing so they can do those things too.

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