

Help! I Have A Teenager!

Understanding Adolescent Development: Tips for Parents

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Definition:

Adolescence – Ages 11-19:

- The period of physical, cognitive and psychological development from the onset of puberty to maturity

Physical Changes



- Puberty and Sexual Development
- Physical appearance and body image

Cognitive Changes



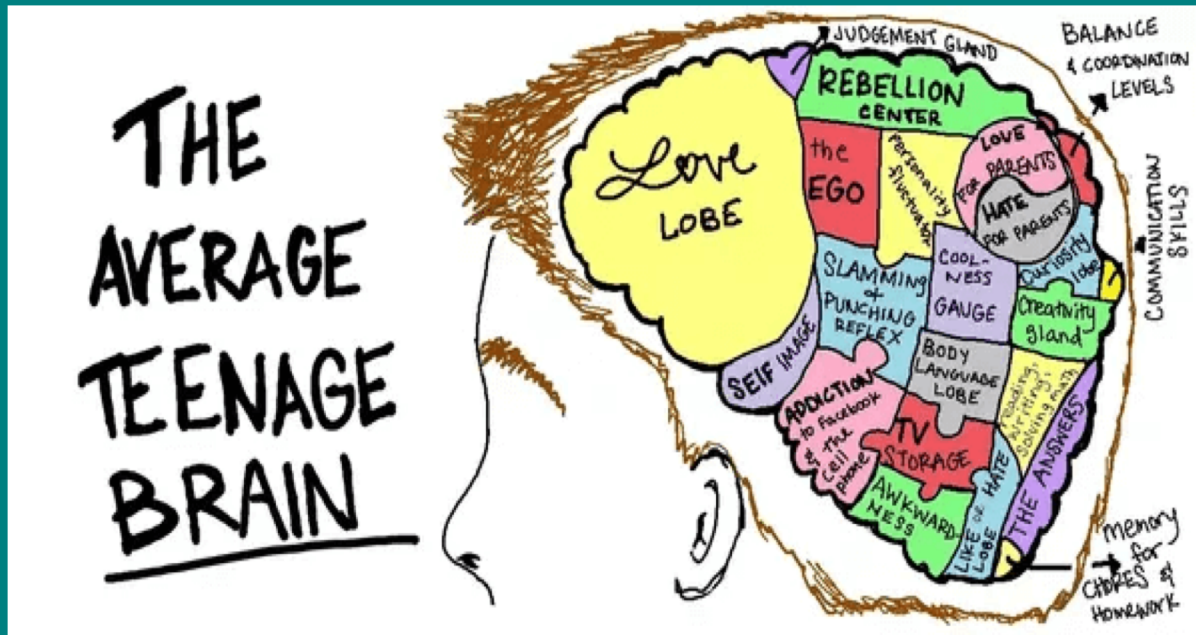
- Moral development
 - Concrete thinking => Abstract thinking
- Trial and error with reasoning and problem solving
 - Short term thinking => future thinking

Emotional Changes



- Sense of identity
 - Self-concept
 - Self-esteem
- Emotional intelligence
- Empathy

Adolescent Brain Development



- Prefrontal Cortex - reasoning, impulse control, rational decision making
- Amygdala - emotion, impulse, “fight or flight” instinct and aggression
- Limbic system - encouraging reward-seeking behavior (e.g. seek out social approval of their peers)
 - Stress and trauma on the brain - slows the prefrontal cortex development

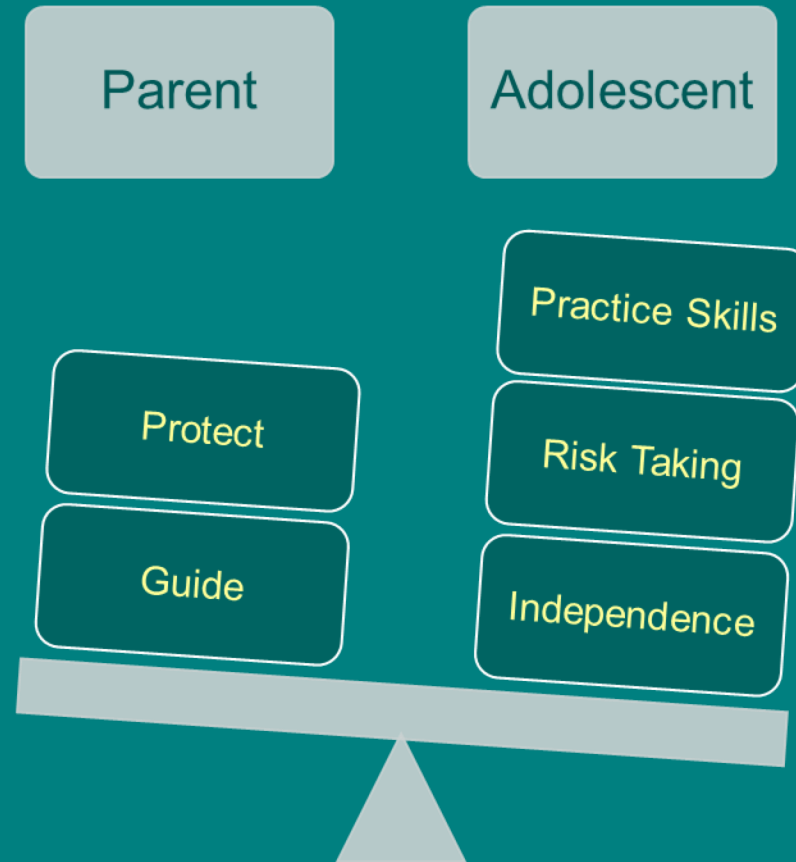
What is “normal” adolescent development?

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|---|--|
| Movement Towards Independence | <i>Argue for the sake of arguing</i> = Experimenting with their new reasoning skills |
| Moral Development | <i>Self-centered</i> = Developing empathy for others |
| Peer Relationships | <i>Their peers opinions are all that matter</i> = Using peers as a temporary reference point as they develop their identity and begin separation from family |
| Exploring their Sexuality/Dating | <i>Overly dramatic</i> = Experimenting with self-awareness and practicing how to identify and manage their emotions |
| Sense of Identity | <i>Constantly finding fault in the adult's position</i> = Experimenting with their critical thinking skills |

Goal of adolescence:

Launching from the family out into the world

Why can this period be so difficult?



Survival Kit: Tips for Parents

Show Love & Support

- Create clear, reasonable expectations and consequences
- Boundaries and limit setting to support them in meeting these expectations
- Praise successes and encourage them to recover when they fail

Trust

- Mutual Respect
- Safe, open communication
- Avoid power struggles

Responsibility

- Allow for independence so they experience success and failure and recovery
- Good role model
- Come to terms with your own self – No longer small children

Why is this balance of independence and limit setting so challenging:

Conflict regarding speed at which increased privileges and responsibilities are granted

Ability to argue back – separation from family can take the form of increased defiance and disrespect

Moral sensibility – wanting to decide for themselves what is right or wrong rather than looking to family

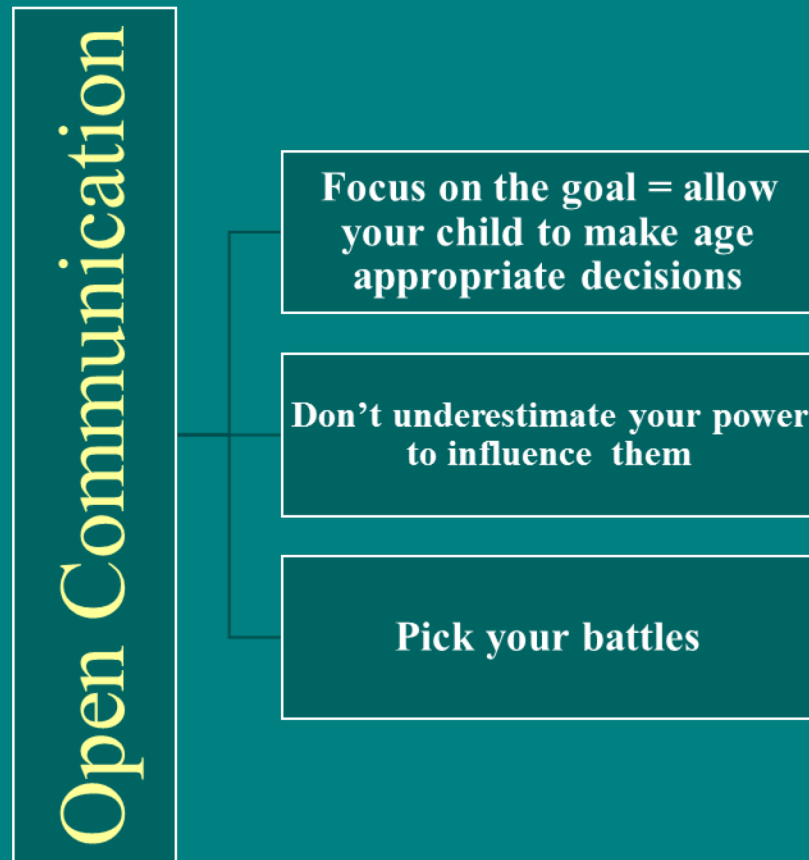
Why is this balance of independence and limit setting so challenging:

Sense of invincibility - Fear for their safety

Inconsistencies between parents with expectations, limits and consequences

Trust

Great communication vs “best friends”



Parenting Tips - Review:

- Show your children love and support
- Clear reasonable expectations and consequences
- Set limits and boundaries
- Mutual respect
- Safe, open communication
- Be a good role model
- Teach your children responsibility – Praise successes and support recovery from failure

Good Luck!