

Growing Pains

Understanding our
adolescent children



Ottawa
Catholic
School Board

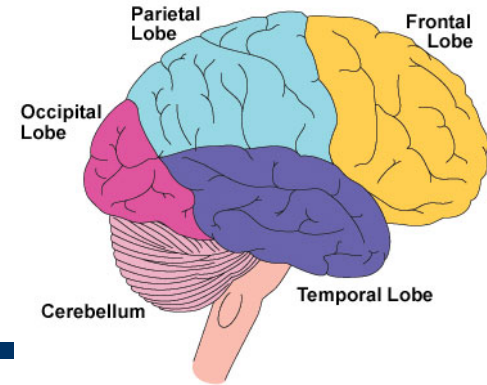


Agenda



- ◆ Brain facts activity
- ◆ The teenage brain – true and false
- ◆ Parts of the brain – activity
- ◆ Communicating with your teenager
- ◆ Working through some scenarios

Brain Facts



Each participant will receive a blank template and a “brain facts” sheet.

- ◆ Read over your “brain fact”.
- ◆ Introduce yourself to each other.
- ◆ Share your “brain fact” with another participant and vice versa. (“Did you know that..”) Then trade stickers.
- ◆ The object of this activity is to meet workshop participants and to learn ten new things about the brain.

Parts of the Brain

Parietal Lobe

Fine tunes body movement.
Processes information from the senses – sight, sound, smell, touch, taste

Develops rapidly early in adolescence

Frontal Lobe

Used in abstract thinking, moral reasoning, decision making

Not fully developed until almost 21 years old

Occipital Lobe

Used for vision

Cerebellum

Controls movement; helps in problem solving, music, attention

Grows a lot in adolescence

Temporal Lobe

Processes language and emotions

Amygdala (inside brain)

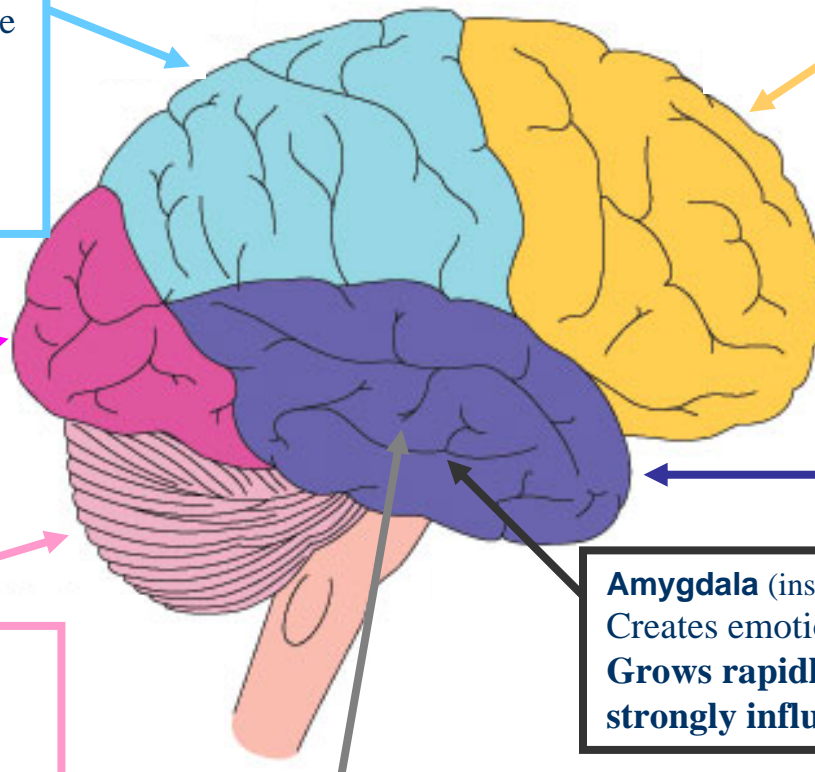
Creates emotions and stores them in memory

Grows rapidly early in adolescence – strongly influences behaviour

Hippocampus (inside brain)

Forms memories; helps with coordination and thinking

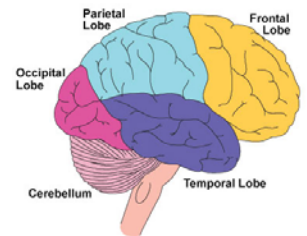
Develops slowly in adolescence



Brain Facts – True or False?

Each group will receive 10 true and false cards.
Please leave these face down on your table.

- ◆ One person at each table will flip a card and read it to the rest of the group.
- ◆ The group decides if the statement is true or false and records the answer on the answer sheet.
- ◆ Discuss each statement and jot down any questions that you may have.





Statement #1

Hormones are to blame for the puzzling behaviour of teens.

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False – hormones play an important role in changing from child to adult. The behaviour that adults find difficult to understand is caused by changes occurring in the brain.



Statement #2

Short term memory increases by about 30% during adolescence.

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True – Teens can remember more information than when they were children. Instead of being able to remember 5 to 7 bits of information, they can remember 7 to 9 bits.



Statement #3

Teens are ruled far more by their emotions than by logic.

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True – adults choose words carefully – they use logic

– the frontal lobe (“seat of reason”) in teens is not fully developed, so they rely on the amygdala (“seat of emotion”)



Statement #4

Teens do not like structure and organization.

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False – the brain looks for patterns when learning new things – this allows for something to build on. Adults need to provide organization and structure to help teens to remember new learnings.



Statement #5

Physical movement helps the brain develop and helps teens to improve their ability to process information.

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True – the cerebellum is the “motor centre” of the brain. It is also involved in problem solving. So, if one strengthens the cerebellum through physical activity, problem solving skills are also enhanced.



Statement #6

Boys' brains and girls' brains are the same.

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False – the male brain is 8% larger – the corpus collosum is larger in girls, enhancing their verbal skills – the cerebellum is larger in boys, giving them better spatial awareness



Statement #7

During the teen years, there is a lot of growth occurring in the front part of the brain. This causes teens to say one thing while doing another.

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True – the frontal lobe is not fully developed. This area is responsible for reason. It is growing during the teen years, making teens more idealistic. However, they do not always follow through on their ideas.



Statement #8

Teens are less vulnerable to stress than adults.

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False – teens are more vulnerable to stress. Serotonin is a chemical in the brain that makes us calm. Levels are low in teens, so they are more easily stressed than adults.



Statement #9

Teens are extremely vulnerable to addiction. Adolescent addictions are harder to break.

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True – Teens are more vulnerable because they are trying to reduce stress, they enjoy novelty and excitement and they react emotionally and don't think things through. Habits learned in adolescence are very hard to break.



Statement #10

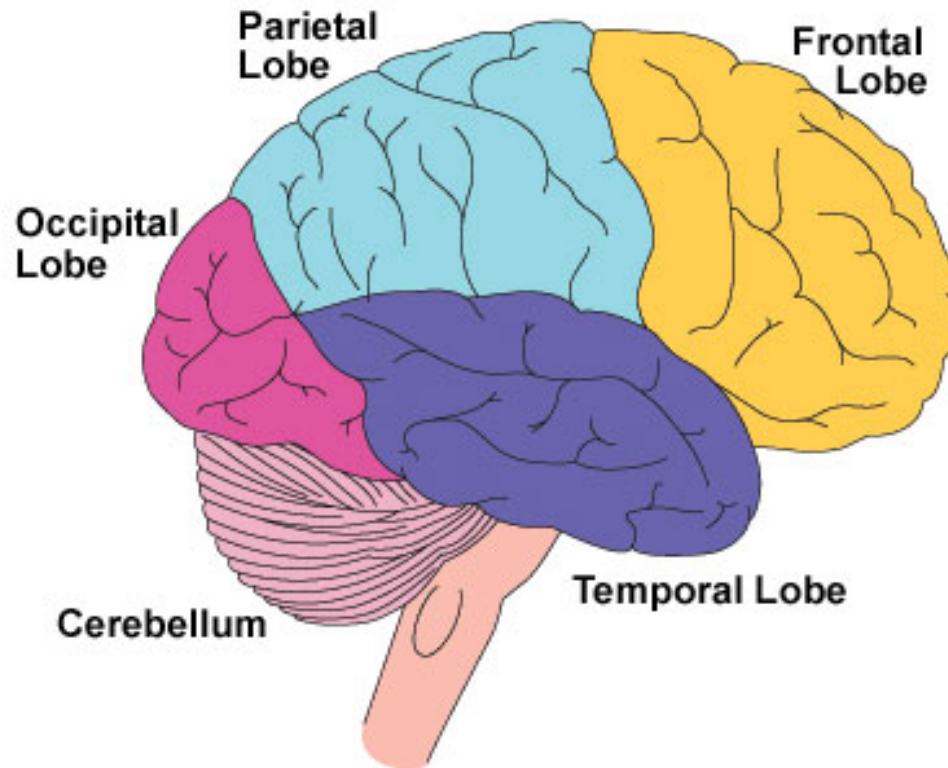
Teens experience emotions before they are able to talk about them.

Statement #10

Teens experience emotions before they are able to talk about them.

True – language and reasoning skills are developing more slowly than their emotions. They will often respond “whatever”.

Parts of the Brain



Matching

Part of the Brain

Frontal Lobe

- ◆ the “voice of reason”
- ◆ logic
- ◆ manages emotions
- ◆ not fully developed until about age 21

Teen Characteristic

Teens often seem moody, emotional, oversensitive and impulsive



Matching

Part of the Brain

Parietal Lobe

- ◆ Responsible for fine tuning of body movements
- ◆ Matures quickly in the teen years

Teen Characteristic

Teens seem to get better at sports and at playing musical instruments. All of a sudden practice really does make perfect.



Matching

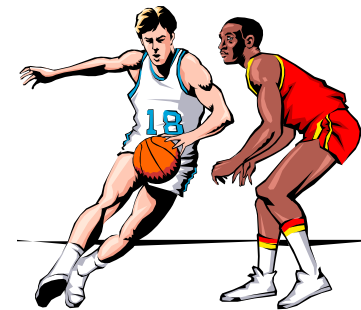
Part of the Brain

Cerebellum

- ◆ Involved with gross motor skills and problem solving and thought processes

Teen Characteristic

Physically active teens
“think” better.



Matching

Part of the Brain

Cerebellum

- ◆ Involved in gross motor skills
- ◆ Larger in boys than it is in girls


Teen Characteristic

Boys need to move around more and have difficulty sitting still





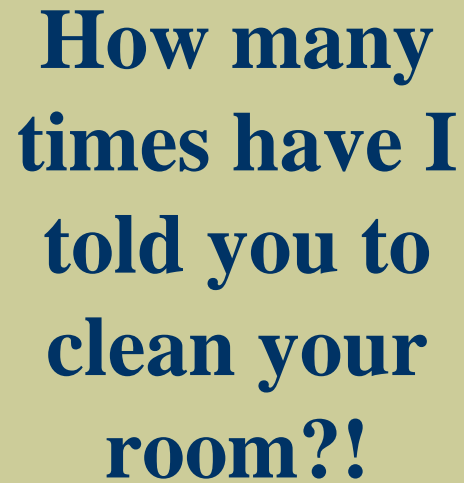
Communication



**Why did
you do
that?**



Communication



**How many
times have I
told you to
clean your
room?!**



Communication



**Turn down
your
music!!**

A dark blue horizontal bar spans the top of the slide, with a gold vertical bar on the left side. A second dark blue horizontal bar is positioned below the title, with a gold rectangular block on the right side.

Communication

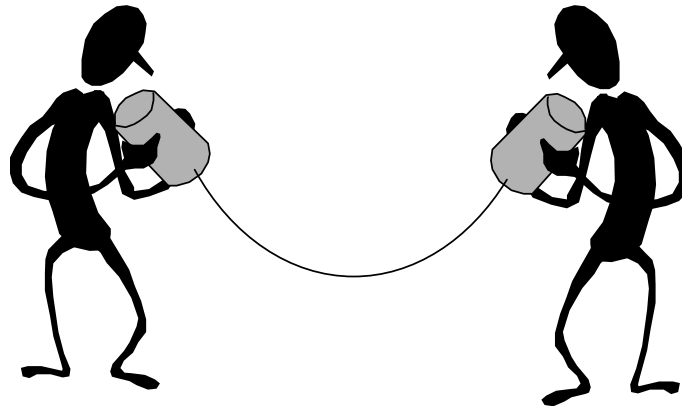
A gold speech bubble with a dark blue outline and a tail pointing downwards and to the right.

**Don't
yell!**

Communication – Choosing your words carefully

Teens do not respond well to being told what to do or to having their actions questioned.

People, in general, do not respond well to “don’t”.



Communication

- ◆ When speaking to your teen, ask open questions that can't be answered with a yes or no.
- ◆ Listen with undivided attention.
- ◆ Use positive language.
- ◆ Instead of saying what you don't want him/her to do, say what you do want him/her to do.

Communication

- ◆ Teens do not usually react well to teasing or jokes. They don't have the self confidence to laugh at themselves.
- ◆ Praise efforts, not just successes.
- ◆ Try not to judge their actions – but do try to talk about them.



Communication

**Why did
you do
that?**

**How can you
avoid this
happening
again?**

Communication

How many times have I told you to clean your room?!

Please clean your room before the end of the weekend.

Communication

**Turn down
your
music!!**

**Your music is
too loud for me.
Would you
please turn it
down?**



Communication



**Don't
yell!!**

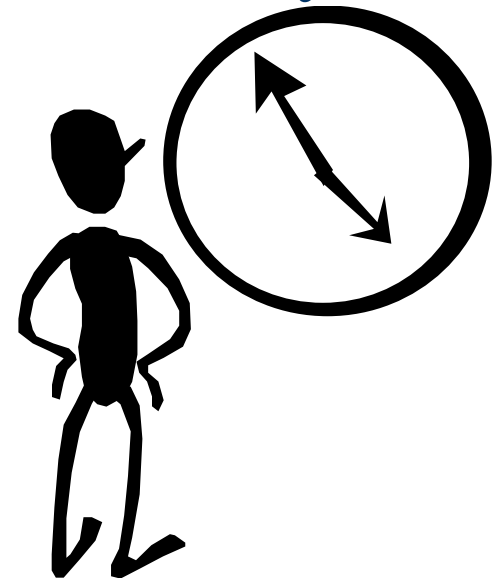


**Please
lower
your
voice.**

Scenario

Your daughter arrives home 30 minutes after the agreed time. She did not call to tell you she was going to be late. You were very worried about her.

How would you handle this situation?



Possible Solutions

- ◆ Make it a rule that your daughter must call if she is going to be late. Explain that you were worried about her.
- ◆ Listen to her explanation for being late and not calling.
- ◆ You may want to give her a consequence for being late, for example, she will have to arrive home 30 minutes earlier next time she is out.

Rules, Limits, Consequences

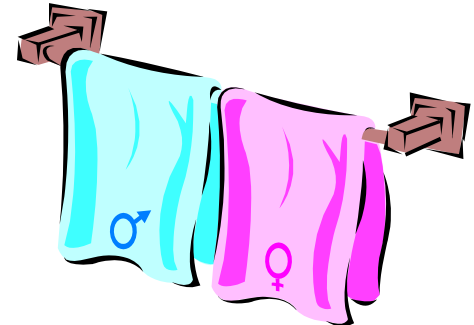
- ◆ Limits set should reflect your family's values.
- ◆ Consequences should relate to the problem.
- ◆ Be consistent, so that your child knows what to expect.
- ◆ Follow through.

Scenario

Each time your son uses the shower, he leaves his wet towels on the bathroom floor.

You are getting angry about this situation.

What will you do to change this behaviour?



Possible Solutions

- ◆ Criticize his actions, not his character.
- ◆ Tell him that this action upsets you.
- ◆ If it happens again, call him to the washroom to pick the towels up. Do not do it for him. If you do this each time, he will change his behaviour, because changing his behaviour is easier than being called back to the washroom.

Things to remember...

- ◆ It is often difficult to understand why teens do what they do. Their brains are undergoing significant changes during this period of their lives.
- ◆ Teens reasoning skills are not fully developed. They are often unreasonable. This is normal. Be patient.

Things to remember....

- ◆ Try to communicate in a positive way. Avoid the word “don’t”. Discuss behaviour, not character.
- ◆ Make time to talk to your teens. Make it easy for them to talk to you.
- ◆ Praise whenever possible. Teens need positive feedback. Feedback should be timely and specific.
- ◆ Try not to judge – better to stick to facts.