

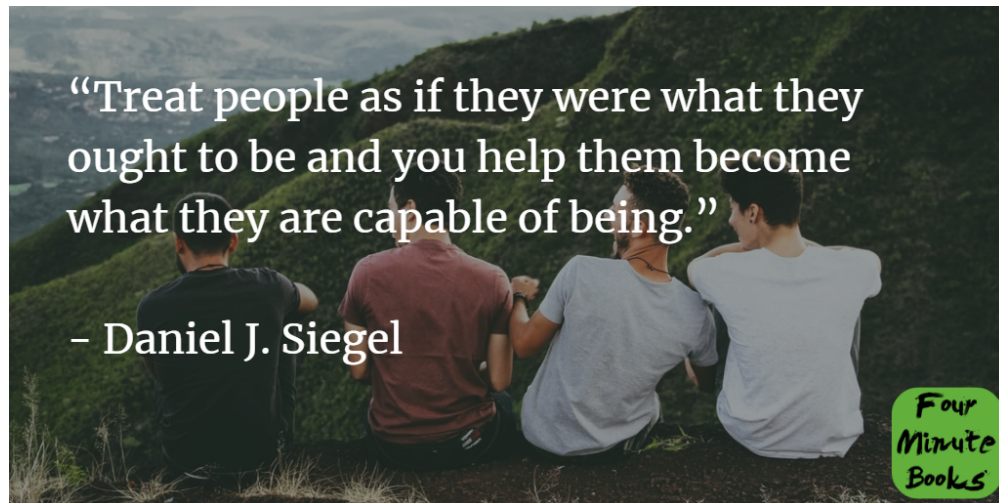
Brainstorm Book Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Brainstorm is a fascinating look into the teenage brain that explains why adolescents act so hormonal and reckless.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Teenagers are the group of people that people hate to love but also love to hate. As a former high-school student teacher, I know how hard they can be. But over time I grew to love them as if they were my own siblings. I still couldn't help but get frustrated with them sometimes, but I remember how hard it was to be that age.

We all remember the awkwardness, angst, and risky behavior of the teenage years. Now that we're adults, though, we wonder how anybody could act in this way. What most of us don't stop to think about is the fact that this age is a significant time of mental development. Much of what happens in our adolescence shapes and defines our adult lives. And all of the frustrating symptoms of being a teenager are just signs that this transformation is working.

In an intriguing venture into what most of us don't usually think of, *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain* teaches us a lot about the teenage brain. You'll learn the science behind why your teenager says they hate you and pushes the limits on what's safe. Most importantly, this book will help you see how to connect with these kids that are going through so much.

Author Daniel J. Siegel also wrote many books about childhood development such as *Aware*, *No-Drama Discipline*, and *The Yes Brain*. He is thus well-equipped to share the science behind developing minds.

Here are 3 of the most interesting lessons I learned about teenagers:

1. What you think is crazy behavior is actually completely normal for adolescents.

2. Knowing how the mind develops in youth can help you understand the importance of this time of life.
3. Reflective conversation is a powerful tool to help prepare teenagers for adulthood, but must be done right to work.

Are you ready to have your idea of the stereotypical teenager changed? Let's begin!

Lesson 1: Adolescents may act strange, but upon closer inspection their behavior is perfectly normal.

It may sound crazy, but the wild behavior of teenagers is a sign that their brain is right on track developmentally. Let's take the embarrassment and frustration that kids suddenly feel toward their parents as one example.

Although this behavior is hurtful, understanding its purpose in the developing mind can help. **All your teenager wants to do is develop a healthy emotional distance so they can be ready to leave your home.** When they lash out and say that they hate you, it's not really true. Instead, see it as the brain's effort to emotionally detach so the transition to adulthood is easier.

Similarly, you may shake your head at the teenagers you know that are constantly pushing the boundaries. They seem to always be doing what's unsafe, and it drives you crazy! But on closer inspection, this behavior is also completely understandable for a teenager.

While connected to the elevated levels of dopamine in their brains and peer pressure, kids recklessness has a higher purpose. It's also related to preparing for leaving home. Looking at it from an evolutionary perspective, early humans needed to be as far away from their family gene pool as possible to have healthier offspring. The disregard for safety in teenagers is an effort for their brains to get out of their comfort zones in preparation to go out away from their family. This has the additional benefit of helping them grow, which allows them better opportunities for education and work.

Lesson 2: The development of the brain during youth is crucial for success later in life.

Not only do teenagers struggle with aggression, but they also appear to be pretty lazy. Partying all night and sleeping in until the early afternoon are hallmarks of adolescence. On closer inspection, however, this time of life is rather productive from the brain's perspective.

In childhood, your brain develops extra neurons and connections. But as you age, the brain begins pruning those parts of the brain it no longer needs. So how does your mind decide what stays and what goes? Look at your prior experience.

A child who shows interest in music, for example, would need to be nurtured to develop that skill. Otherwise, in her teenage years, the brain may see the musical experiences as unnecessary, and prune the associated neural connections.

sports or music, then they will become better as they age because of myelination. Also remember that this process makes kids wiser after it's done. So you can trust that they are getting smarter even if it doesn't seem like it at the time.

Lesson 3: Learning the right way to have reflective conversations with teenagers will help them prepare for adulthood.

As frustrating as the behavior of teenagers is, they need help navigating this difficult time. They're figuring out who they are, but most of them feel inadequate and awkward. It's hard to make new friends and fit in. So what can adults do to help?

Most importantly, help teenagers communicate feelings by having reflective conversations. **In its simplicity, a reflective conversation is talking without a filter on emotions, thoughts, dreams, or anything.** It's the kind of talk with your kid that lets them know they can be open with you without being punished for saying anything.

It's easy to get stuck talking about the day-to-day activities but steer away from this. Instead of discussing school or sports, focus on dreams, aspirations, relationships, and even sex. Done the right way, these conversations will help your teenager relate to others better. It's vital to notice the emotions an adolescent shares through what they say.

Additionally, connecting in this way allows them to develop empathy. Conversations centering on reflection stimulate the prefrontal cortex, or the part of the brain that helps us relate to others. This progress happens at a crucial stage in a young person's life. With the power of empathy, teenagers will find more confidence and be better prepared for adult life.

Brainstorm Review

After reading *Brainstorm* I have a renewed appreciation for my teenage years. I also have a lot more compassion for the difficulties that those in adolescence face. This book is an amazing read that gives some great scientific data on why teenagers act the way they do!

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Who would I recommend the Brainstorm book summary to?

The 45-year-old parent of teenagers who has no idea why they are acting the way they are, the 30-year-old high school teacher who is at her wits end with her rowdy classes, and anyone who is a teenager.