

# *Building Resilience in Teenagers*



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# *Changes During Adolescence*

- Profound changes in short time
  - Biological
  - Cognitive
    - Two brain networks
    - Hypothetical thinking and arguing
  - Social/family
  - Intra-psychic
  - *Asynchronicity*: Doesn't all happen at the same time & doesn't happen for good



# *What are the Developmental Tasks of Adolescence?*

Build on & are related to each other

- Identity
  - Who am I? What I am good at? What am I good for?
- Autonomy
  - From parents, not peers
  - Emotional, behavioral, attitudinal

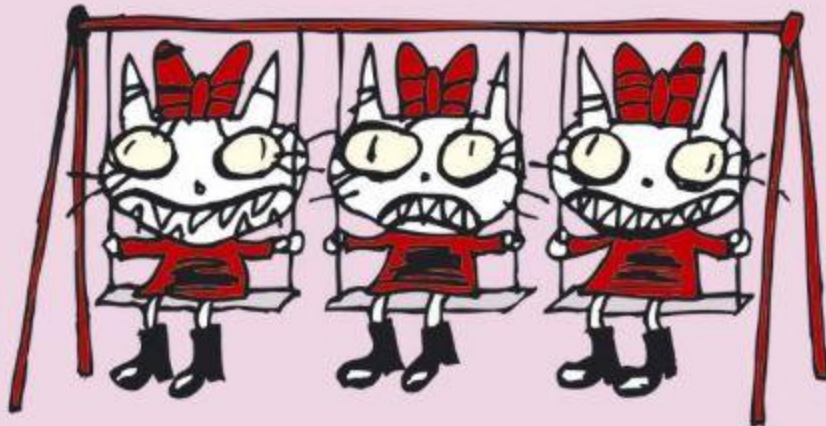


# *What are the Developmental Tasks of Adolescence?*

- Achievement
  - What path do I take? How hard do I work and why? What do I want to do with my life?
- Sexuality
  - Who am I attracted to? What are these physical feelings & how do I interpret them? Who am I as a sexual being? How do I act in a sexual manner?
- Negotiating problem behavior



# *Is Adolescence A Time of Emotional Turmoil?*



Let's PLAY ON MY MOOD SWINGS



# *Is Adolescence A Time of Emotional Turmoil?*

- Not a constant state of “storm and stress”
- Emotional highs and lows do increase in early adolescence
  - Hormonal fluctuations AND changes in environment
    - Social factors account for 2-4 times as much variance as hormonal factors
  - Not knowing how to adequately express feelings
  - Personal fable
  - Still developing PFC regulates mood, so more reliance on amygdala
- Adolescents report more extreme emotions and more fleeting emotions than their parents do
  - More likely to report “very happy” and “very sad”
  - From 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 50% decrease in being “very happy”



# *Reading Emotions*



- Teens not always able to correctly read emotion in adult face
  - See anger, sadness, shock when not present, which influences behavior
  - Rely more on amygdala (adults more on PFC) when interpreting emotions on faces in pictures
  - Decrease in ability to identify emotions by 20% from childhood; do not recover until 18
- Pubertal status predicts emotion recognition (not age)
  - Greatest improvements over time seen in fear, disgust
  - More amygdalar activation to fear than adults
  - Also drop in facial recognition from 10-12, then recovery from 14-16



# *Factors Precipitating Changing Parent-Teen Relations*

- **Change from uni-directional caretaker relationship to more mutuality**
- **Physical development**
- **Cognitive changes**
  - Reasoning about rights
  - Personal fable
  - Compare to ideal & become critical





# *Factors Precipitating Changing Parent-Teen Relations*

- **Sexuality:**
  - **Discomfort**
  - **Competition issues**
- **Identity issues:**
  - **Magnify differences between self/parents to differentiate**
  - **Use parents as negative role models**
  - **More focus on peers**



# *Parental Factors Influencing Changing Parent-Teen Relations*



- **Physical changes:**
  - Teen entering attractive stage, parents losing youthfulness
  - Parental changes & influence on mood, patience
- **Sexuality: Changes due to age; same partner for 20 yrs**
- **Identity/accomplishments: Parent, worker**
  - Have I fulfilled dreams of my youth? Were trade-off & compromises worth it? Have I produced the child of my dreams?

# *How Families Change over Time*

- **Engagement:** Less time spent with parents (different definitions for being together)
- **Communication:** 5th-6th grade parents high in initiating conversations, then teen initiated
- **Acceptance, cohesion**
  - Peer preference seen as rejection by parents
- **Power**
- **Conflict:** Less value of parent opinion, especially with appearance, recreational activities



# *Conflict Resolution Styles (CRS) More Important Than Presence of Conflict*

- **Kinds of CRS**

- **Compromise**

- Room for teen to express own views, promotes growth

- **Attack**

- Most problematic: Sarcasm, threats, put-downs; associated with delinquency, acting out

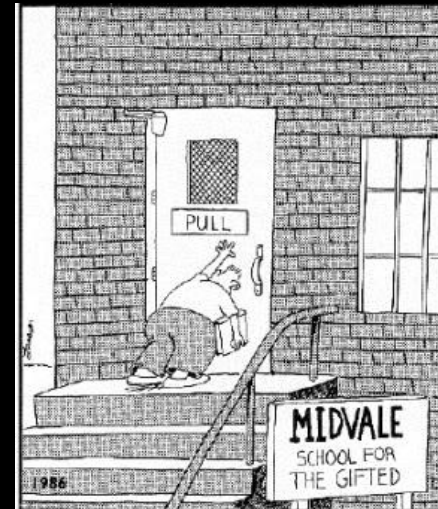
- **Withdrawal**

- Associated w/depression, anxiety



# *School and Success*

- What does success mean to you?
- What do you want for your child when s/he is 18? 25? 35? 55?



# *What is Success?*

- Happiness
  - With career, social/family life, choices
- Social/emotional skills
  - Compassion, empathy, generosity, etc.
  - Collaboration
  - Ability to take constructive criticism
  - Have fun
- Hard-working, ability to persevere
- Creativity, critical thinking skills
- Resilience

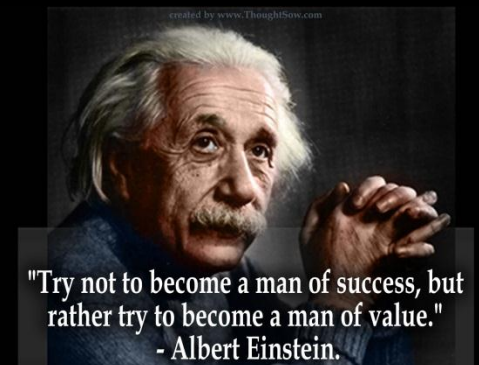


**SUCCESS**

Because you too can own this face of pure accomplishment

# *Resilience*

- Ability to bounce back
- Cope with stressors
- Able to heal self and others
- Able to hear and incorporate feedback
  - The problem with praise





# *Primary Protective Factors*

- The presence of a caring, connected relationship with an adult
- The presence of the highest possible realistic expectations
- Opportunities to make meaningful contributions



# *Problems*



- Depression
- Anxiety
- Eating Disorders
- Self-harm behaviors
- Substance Use/Abuse
- Excessively Risky Behaviors
- Perfectionism



# *Perfectionism*

- Perfectionism can be enemy of resilience
  - Cannot be terrified of a “bad” grade ~ no risk taking or creativity
  - Everyone is lopsided – especially successful people
  - Myth that tells kids they have to excel at everything undermines many aspects of development



## *“Lack of Motivation”*

- What about kids that “aren’t motivated” or “lazy”?
- Are the expectations realistic?
- Have they stopped playing a game they can’t or don’t want to win?
- Change the question – not, “What can I do to get my child into a top tier school?” but “What can I do to ensure that my child is successful (full definition of success) at 30, 40, beyond?”

# *Emotions and Learning:*

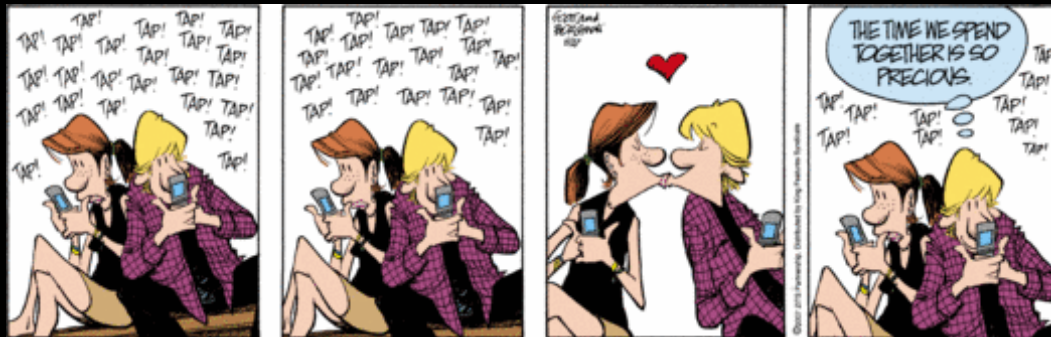
## *The Brain in Distress*

### *Why Pressuring Kids Can Backfire*

- Less able to index, store, and access information when stressed
- Becomes more automatic and limited in its responses
- Less able to perceive relationships and patterns
- Less working memory, long-term memory capacity
  - Hippocampus: Consolidation of LTM; many stress hormone receptors
- Tends to overreact to stimuli in fear-based way
- **Emotion processing areas of the brain receive more blood flow under stressful circumstances, while the areas used for critical thinking, judgment, and creativity receive less.**

# *Remember the Needs of Teenagers*

- Autonomy
- Belonging
- Competence



# *Recommendations*



- Shift role to consultant:
  - Ask questions
  - I'm wondering, I'm curious...
- Build self-esteem by letting them accomplish tasks on their own
  - Watch overt vs. covert messages that damage self-concept/self-esteem
  - Help them own their problems and solutions
  - You both gain control through choices: Would you rather...now or later?



# *Recommendations*



- Be prepared ~ plan ahead, know what to expect
  - Educate yourself about development
- Understand what is going on for you as a parent and how that affects your child/relationship/reactions.
  - Don't disengage even if they seem to shut you out
  - Try not to take it personally
  - Be positive/optimistic
  - Get support

# *Recommendations*



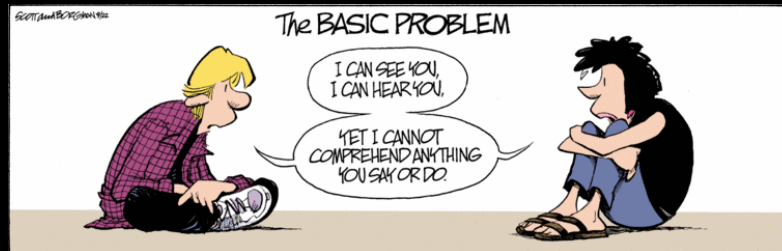
- Set clear, reasoned limits
  - Know when to be flexible and when to stand firm
  - Grant freedom in stages; tie privileges to responsibilities
  - Stand back and let them make their own mistakes when safety is not an issue
- Be firm and fair
  - Don't overreact – what is really going on?
  - Penalty should fit the crime – what are you trying to teach?
  - Be consistent
    - With your child
    - With your partner
    - When pressured by your child

# *Recommendations*

- Build a loving, trusting relationship
  - Spend time (alone) together ~ have fun, no criticism
  - Share your own feelings/concerns
  - Treat your child with respect
  - Use humor (wisely)
- Empathy
  - Deliver consequences with empathy in mind
    - Consequences don't have to be immediate: okay to both do some thinking and talk later
  - Try to understand what is going on for them
    - Developmentally, socially
    - How the world is different from your experience

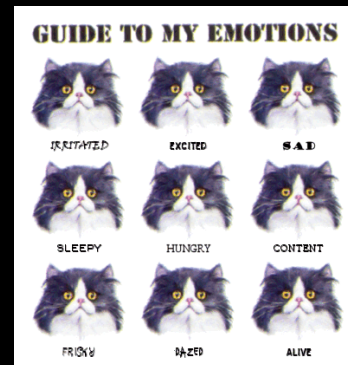
# Recommendations

- Communication
  - Accept child as individual who can make own choices
  - Don't criticize or ridicule
  - Don't give too many orders/lectures,
  - Don't treat their problems lightly
- Reflective listening



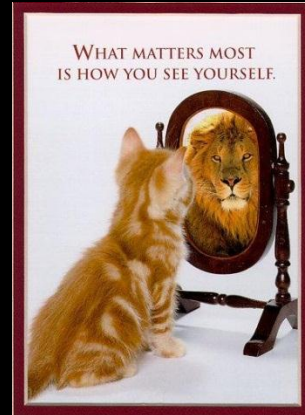
# *Reflective Listening*

- “Nobody ever listens to me!”
  - How most conversations tend to go
  - Why we repeat ourselves
- Communicating so that the speaker feels heard and understood
- Involves monitoring your own emotions and how they are expressed
  - Mantra: “This is not about me.”
  - Understand what is going on for you and how it affects your interactions with others
- Also involves monitoring nonverbal communication, validating, paraphrasing, asking clarifying questions



# *Reflective Listening*

- Give full attention
- Acknowledge, do not deny, feelings
  - All feelings are accepted
  - Feelings cannot be controlled; behaviors can
  - Name feelings, but double-check
    - “You seem angry – is that right?”
- Do not give advice
- Other person should be doing most of the talking

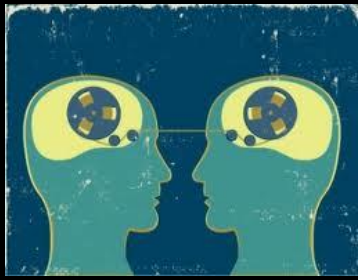


# *Empathy*

- Truly understand where other person is coming from and feel what s/he is feeling
  - Need to understand influences at all levels
  - Including past experience, outside stressors, abilities, what is important to them, values, etc.







# *Empathy*



- Questions to ask to stimulate empathy in yourself:
  - If I were this person, how would I feel?
  - Am I truly willing to listen and be open to considering the situation from another perspective?
  - Can I come up with another way to see this situation?
  - What might have happened in the past to cause her to feel/act this way?
  - What is it that he needs that he is not getting?
  - Am I feeling frustrated/angry/annoyed? How is my communication of my feelings influencing the other person?
  - Who or what does this situation/person remind me of? Am I reacting to something from my own life, and not this particular situation/person?
  - Are my expectations realistic? How do I feel when others place unrealistic expectations on me?

# Questions?



"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."

# *Recommended Reading*



- *Parenting Teens with Love and Logic* by Foster Cline and Jim Fay
- *How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- *Inside the Teenage Brain: Parenting a Work in Progress* by Sheryl Feinstein
- *Letting Go with Love and Confidence: Raising Responsible, Resilient, Self-Sufficient Teens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Kenneth Ginsburg and Susan FitzGerald
- *Getting to Calm: Cool-headed Strategies for Parenting Teens and Tweens* by Laura Kastner and Jennifer Wyatt
- *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee/B Minus* by Wendy Mogel
- *Grow The Tree You Got & 99 Other Ideas for Raising Amazing Adolescents and Teenagers* by Tom Sturges