

***Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain
Implications for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention***

David Walsh, Ph.D.
dwalsh@DrDavidWalsh.com

Adolescence has been described as a "normally abnormal stage of life." This workshop, based on Dr. David Walsh's best selling book, explains exactly what happens to the adolescent brain on the path from childhood into adulthood. Revealing the latest scientific findings in easy-to-understand terms, Dr. Walsh shows why moodiness, quickness to anger, willingness to take risks, miscommunication and other familiar teenage behavior are so common—all are linked to physical changes and growth in the adolescent brain. Dr. Walsh will also use this information to explain the impact and dangers that alcohol and drug use pose for teens and the implications for prevention.

Goals

Participants will have an understanding of the major features of adolescent brain development, how they affect behavior and the implications for teenage alcohol and drug abuse prevention.

Outline

- I. The Teen Brain—a Work in Progress
- II. The Prefrontal Cortex—the Brain's Supervisor
 - a. The Story of Phineas Gage
 - b. Role of Prefrontal Cortex
 - c. The Teen Prefrontal Cortex
 - d. Why Teens Engage in Risky Behavior
- III. Hormones and the Brain's Accelerations Center
 - a. Testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone
 - b. The emotional roller coaster
 - c. Risk for depression
- IV. Communication and the Teen Brain

- a. Role of the amygdala in miscommunication
 - b. Implications
 - c. Strategies to reduce miscommunication
- V. The Sexual Brain
- a. Male and female brain differences.
 - b. Sexual interest and the teen brain
 - c. Romance and the teen brain
- VI. Alcohol, Drugs and the Teen Brain
- a. Increased risk for abuse and addiction
 - b. Damage is greater on a dose for dose basis
 - c. Warning signals go off later thereby increasing risk.
- VII. Anxiety and the Risk for Alcohol Abuse
- a. Undiagnosed anxiety disorders
 - b. Alcohol reduces anxiety thereby posing risks for anxious teens.
- VII. Prevention Strategies
- a. Connection.
 - The brain is built for connection.
 - Lack of connection puts brains into stress
 - b. Guidance
 - Importance of curfews, limits, consequences
 - c. Love
 - Love as a delayed gratification activity