Exploring Teen Brain Development for School Counselors

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Learning outcomes:

1) Deliver developmentally appropriate classroom lessons, group activities and individual sessions to address adolescents' social/emotional needs.
2) Collaborate with teachers and administrators to implement effective classroom management techniques.
3) Design workshops for parents and other stakeholders regarding risk-taking behaviors in adolescents.
4) Advocate for adolescents regarding equitable school policies.
Neural Pathways
TEENS:
WHEN YOU “GET” THEM,
YOU’VE “GOT” THEM.

Some initial thoughts

- There’s always exceptions...speaking in generals
- This is not the “worst” generation
- There is rarely a singular causation
- Children and teens have the capacity to be resilient
- The word, “adolescence.”
Transitions in Environment

- Puberty
- Access to Smartphone
- Middle School > High School
- Standardized tests
- College Applications
- Disconnecting from parents
- Seeking acceptance within peer groups
- Dating/Romantic Relationships
- Chemical substances
- Increase in sensation seeking
- Technology/Media
- Driving
Developmental Theories

• Piaget
• Erikson
• Identity

Cognitive Distortions in Adolescence

Egocentrism & Elkind

Imaginary audience
Personal fable
What emotion is this?
Get Up and Stand Up to Myths!

Limbic System

- **Hypothalamus**: Releases hormones
- **Amygdala**: Emotions
- **Hippocampus**: Memory
Pre-Frontal Cortex

CEO of the brain
- Planning
- Time Management
- Organization
- Working memory
- Metacognition
- Self-regulation
- Task initiation
- Flexibility
- Mood modulation

✓ PFC is the last part of the brain to fully develop

The “No-Brainer”

Good Idea or Bad Idea?

Good Idea?

Prof. Abigail Baird of Vassar College discusses how fMRI studies reveal differences between teen and adult brains when considering dangerous behavior. Evidence suggests that emotion plays a critical role in making good choices.
The Interstate System

Approaches

• Balance between educational and person-centered
• Solution-focused
• Reality
• Cognitive
• Behavioral
• Systems

• Always.
• Be.
• Curious.
Executive skills in school

Executive Skills
• We have to show them, again, and again
• Study skills (Thomas Frank “The College Info Geek”)
• School-wide policy
• Classroom lessons
  – Planners
  – iCalender
  – Google
• Groups
• Individual sessions
National Sleep Foundation... “Sleep in America”

- What is optimal sleep time for 13-18 year olds?
- 20% get nine or more while 60% get less than 8 hours
- So, 53% nap on weekdays and 50% drink 3 or more caffeinated beverages per day.
- ADHD PET Scans, Judith Owens, MD
- Minnesota Schools

National Sleep Foundation
Sleep and Technology: 
13-18 year-olds

Within one hour of falling asleep...
- 85% are watching TV
- 80% are on phone, tablet, computer
- 30% are playing video games
- 25% are woken from their smartphones