



Parenting the Teenage Brain: Understanding a Work in Progress

By Sheryl Feinstein

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Teenagers are perplexing, intriguing, and spirited creatures. In an attempt to discover the secrets to their thoughts and actions, parents have tried talking, cajoling, and begging them for answers. The result has usually been just more confusion. But new and exciting light is being shed on these mysterious young adults. What was once thought to be hormones run amuck can now be explained with modern medical technology. MRI and PET scans view the human brain while it is alive and functioning. To no one's surprise, the teenage brain is under heavy construction! These discoveries are helping parents understand the (until now) unexplainable teenager. Neuroscience can help parents adjust to the highs and lows of teenage behavior. Typically, this transformation is a prickly proposition for both teens and their families, but the trials and tribulations of adolescence give teenagers a second chance to develop and create the brain they will take into adulthood.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

High-tech scans of the brains of teenagers and adults show marked differences that explain teens' moodiness and lack of focus, which parents have always attributed to hormones. It turns out that teenage brains are changing right along with teenage bodies. Feinstein begins by examining current research on how teen brains differ from adult brains and what that means for adolescent emotions and actions. Among the findings from brain scans: teens and adults rely on different parts of the brain, and parts of the adolescent brain increase in efficiency by 100 percent. Separate chapters focus on how their developing brains affect teens' decisions and actions socially, emotionally, and in school. The chapter on physical changes includes frank discussion of gay, lesbian, and transgender sexuality. Feinstein also analyzes parenting styles and strategies, sorting out what works (strong communication, support, and trust) and what doesn't (nagging, lecturing, and arguing). The final chapter offers a book-club format for parents interested in more closely pursuing the advice and materials in a group setting. Feinstein provides practical advice, but what makes her book particularly interesting is the insight on how the adolescent brain functions. --Vanessa Bush

Review

This book is what every parent of an adolescent needs and wants. Feinstein's engaging stories and clear translation of the current neuroscience research will captivate any reader wondering why those kids act the way they do. This is a must read for parents, teachers, and others who interact with this misunderstood age group. I highly recommend it! (Marilee Sprenger, educational neuroscience consultant, Peoria, Illinois)

Today's parents face major challenges in helping their children successfully navigate through a multitude of risks on the road to maturity. In this book, Dr. Feinstein taps exciting new research on the teenage brain to provide parents and mentors powerful new tools to connect with youth and guide them on pathways to responsibility. (Larry K Brendtro, Ph.D., psychologist and founder of Reclaiming Youth International)

I am quite delighted to see this new book on parenting by Dr. Sheryl Feinstein. She has linked new and compelling research on the adolescent brain with the ever-challenging role of parenting. Dr. Feinstein's thought-provoking, yet amusing discussion gives us a refreshing opportunity to deepen our understanding of the adolescent and refine our parenting skills...An abundance of practical advice, with a dash of groundbreaking research, is offered at every turn of the page...Those of us who have been involved in education and brain research welcome this informed application to parenting. Dr. Feinstein has certainly produced a significant and long-overdue book on parenting the teenage brain. (from the Foreword by Eric Jensen, Jensen Learning Corporation, San Diego)

Feinstein's approach is straightforward and readable, providing very clear examples of ways to handle situations and build relationships....a useful tool for parents and anyone who works closely with teens, helping to put recent research in into a workable perspective. (*VOYA*, April 2008)

Sheryl Feinstein focuses on the critical importance of 'high-quality relationships between parents and teens.' She not only describes these relationships and how to develop them, she also goes deeper to explain how the teenage brain physiologically becomes an adult brain, characterized by emotional stability and social responsibility. To acquire an adult brain, a teenager must have the opportunity, best provided by caring, knowledgeable parents, to experience and practice real-life, responsible decision making and problem solving. The more the teenager has these opportunities, the more the teenage brain will be able to grow the

actual neurological structures of the adult brain. Feinstein shows, clearly and specifically, how parents can be the parents teens need to help them mature into responsible adults. An invaluable guide for every parent. (Rita Smilkstein, award winning author, Woodring College of Education, Western Washington University, Seattle)

About the Author

Sheryl Feinstein, Ed.D. is an associate professor at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Users Review

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