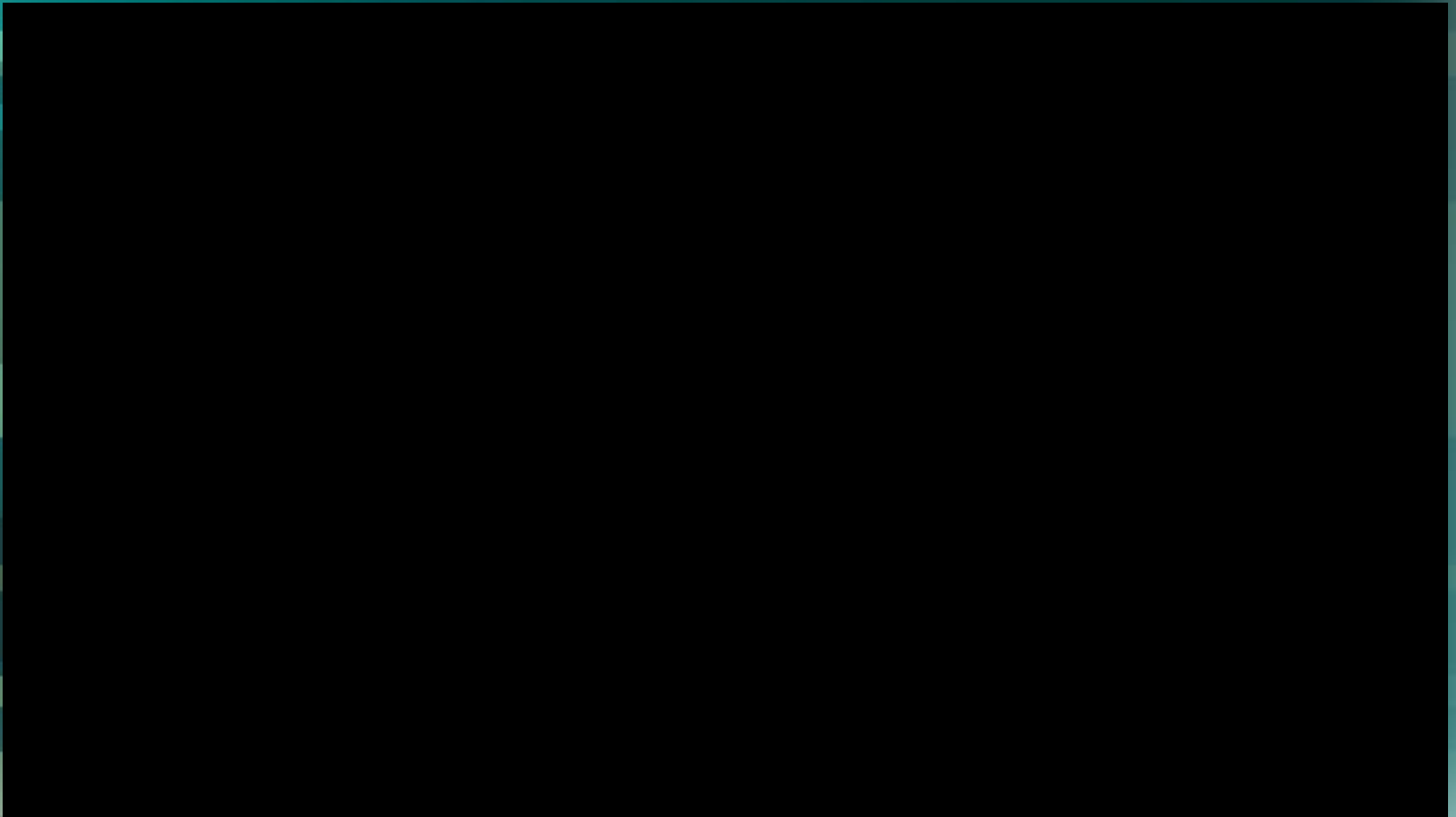


Mental Health & Your Developing Teen



Warning Signs



The Teenage Brain

- The teen brain is less mature than an adult's brain
- Brain structures under development during teen years:
- Pre-frontal cortex (behind forehead) is involved in the evaluation of rewards and risks as well as the ability to plan ahead. This part of the brain is not fully developed until the mid-to late 20's.
- Limbic system is involved in the regulation of emotions. This system often develops ahead of the pre-frontal cortex. The problem: when teens make decisions in emotionally charged situation, they often do so using feelings (limbic system) rather than logic (pre-frontal cortex). Teens can appear more impulsive, reacting in the "heat of the moment".
- Experiences and activities influence the developing teen brain:
- Neural pathways that send messages through the brain are modified through two processes: myelination and pruning. Myelination strengthens neural pathways, just as electrical wires are strengthened with plastic cord. Pruning removes neural pathways that are used very little, hence the saying "Use it or lose it".
- Students who have support in making good decisions and frequently practice these skills will strengthen neural pathways, even though the pre-frontal cortex is still under construction.
- Ways to cultivate good decision making in teens includes teaching teens to stop and think. It gives them a chance to evaluate outcomes they may not have considered in the moment.

Sleep is Important

Biological sleep patterns shift toward later times for both sleeping and waking during adolescence -- meaning it is natural to not be able to fall asleep before 11:00 pm.

Teens need about 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night to function best. Most teens do not get enough sleep — one study found that only 15% reported sleeping 8 1/2 hours on school nights.

When you are sleep deprived, you are as impaired as driving with a blood alcohol content of .08%, which is illegal for drivers in many states. Drowsy driving causes over 100,000 crashes each year.

Recognize sleep deprivation and call someone else for a ride. Only sleep can save you!



Anxiety

- 8% of teens, 13-18, have an anxiety disorder
- Symptoms often appear as early as 6
- Only 18% receive mental health care.
- Described as feeling anxious, stressed, wound up, nervous, on edge, worried, tense, or hassled.
- Anxiety Disorders vs Normal Anxiety:
 - Anxiety Disorders are more severe, it is long lasting, and interferes with the person's studies, other activities, and family/social relationships.

Depression

- More than 800,000 American adolescents suffer from depression each year.
- Three quarters of adolescents with depression go undiagnosed and/or untreated (Garber et al., 2009).
- Asian American girls have highest rates of depressive symptoms (NAMI, 2011).
- Early recognition/treatment of depression & other psychiatric illnesses is believed to be most effective way to prevent suicide (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2008).
- Some signs are, but not limited to:
 - Change in mood for over 2 weeks, isolation from other people, changes in relationships, not doing things he/she typically likes to do, change in eating/sleeping habits, withdrawn, increase in negative talk, talking about death/suicide (Boston Children's Hospital, 2013).

Teen Suicide

- *One out of every 53* high school students (1.9%) reported having made a suicide attempt that was serious enough to be treated by a doctor/nurse (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention).
- Suicide is the *3rd* leading cause of death among teenagers (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention).
- Suicide is the *2nd* leading cause of death among Asian American and Pacific Island youth between the ages of 15 and 19.
- Be aware of warning signs: threatening to hurt or kill themselves; seeking access to pills/ weapons; talking or writing about death, dying or, suicide; expressing hopelessness; increase of alcohol or drug use; withdrawing from friends, family, or society; sleeping all the time or being unable to sleep; being anxious or agitated; dramatic mood swings; giving away prized possessions.

Substance Abuse

Just Say Know

- Alcohol is used by more young people in the U.S. than tobacco or illicit drugs.
- The brains of adolescents are still developing so early intervention is key. Alcohol abuse in adolescents affects the area of the brain that controls decision making and memory, while marijuana use in adolescence is associated with lower IQ and poorer memory.
- **Teens who start drinking in their early to mid teens are far more likely to develop alcohol dependency. People who reported starting to drink before the age of 15 were 4x more likely to also report meeting alcohol dependence criteria at some point later in life. The law requiring a person to be 21 to drink makes good sense from this perspective. Parents underestimate the fact that their own kids drink.**
- People who use marijuana are more likely to have anxiety or depression, but it's unclear which comes first... the substance use or mental health problem.
- Ongoing substance misuse can lead to a decline in grades/school performance; increased absenteeism, sexual risk-taking (unsafe sex), other risk-taking behavior like driving while intoxicated, or other legal problems like theft or vandalism and increase self-injury or suicidal ideation/behavior.
- A nonprofit organization that helps parents prevent, intervene, and find treatment for drug and alcohol use by their children: www.drugfree.org

Eating Disorders

- Eating disorders are not just about food, weight, appearance, or willpower; they are serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses.
- *Anorexia Nervosa* is an eating disorder characterized by an abnormally low body weight, intense fear of gaining weight and a distorted perception of body weight.
- *Bulimia Nervosa* is a serious, potentially life-threatening eating disorder. People with bulimia may secretly binge — eating large amounts of food — and then purge, trying to get rid of the extra calories in an unhealthy way. For example, someone with bulimia may force vomiting or engage in excessive exercise. Sometimes people purge after eating only a small snack or a normal-size meal.

Mental Health is Treatable

- Medication
- Psychotropic medications are substances that affect brain chemicals related to mood and behavior
- Psychotherapy: Psychotherapies can be adapted to the needs of children and adolescents, depending on the mental disorder.
 - Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
 - Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
 - Interpersonal therapy (IPT)
 - Family-focused Therapy
- Psychosocial therapies can be very effective alone and in combination with medications

Things to Know

- Information shared with counselors do not become part of your student's school record.
- Offer emotional support, understanding, patience, and encouragement.
- Talk to him or her, and listen carefully.
- Never dismiss feelings, but point out realities and offer hope.
- Never ignore comments about suicide, and report them to your loved one's therapist or doctor.
- Invite your loved one out for walks, outings and other activities. Keep trying if he or she declines, but don't push him or her to take on too much too soon.
- Provide assistance in getting to the doctor's appointments.
- Remind your loved one that with time and treatment, the mental health symptoms will lift.

Resources

- **School Setting:**
- Teachers, Counselors, School Psychologist, Administrators
- **Community:**
- Mental health specialists, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or mental health counselors
- Health maintenance organizations
- Community mental health centers
- Hospital psychiatry departments and outpatient clinics
- Mental health programs at universities or medical schools
- State hospital outpatient clinics
- Family services, social agencies, or clergy
- Peer support groups
- Private clinics and facilities
- Employee assistance programs
- Local medical and/or psychiatric societies.

Resources

- Call the Police or 911 for URGENT or dangerous situations.
- Contact your family's medical provider
- Mental Health Services in Alameda County
 - (510) 618-1920
 - <http://www.acphd.org/media/394696/mental-health-matrix.pdf>
- Fremont Youth and Family Services- 510-574-2100
- Family Education and Resource Center-
<http://askferc.org>
- Hume Center- www.humecenter.org