



A New Kind of Parenting: Raising Kids 10 to 16 Years Old with Dr. Jean Clinton



Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth. Guided by research, the network provides leadership for participating agencies to plan and integrate services and supports so all children thrive.

www.ourkidsnetwork.ca

This resource was developed by Our Kids Network to accompany videos of a lecture by Dr. Jean Clinton. Key themes were chosen based on the best practice research on adolescent development and common concerns identified by parents of preteens and teens.

The videos can be viewed online at www.ourkidsnetwork.ca.

Table of Contents

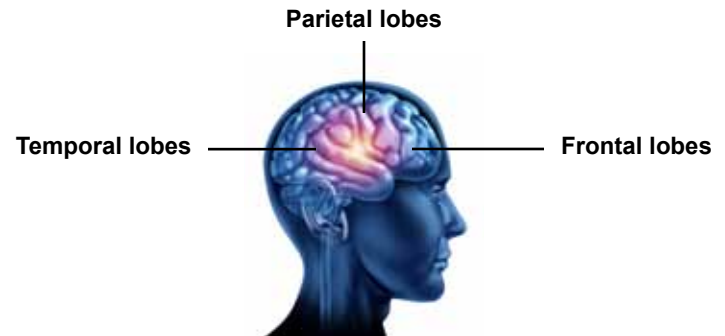


The Teen Brain – “Under Construction”	3
A New Kind of Parenting.....	4
40 Developmental Assets	5
Rudeness and Disrespect	6
Communication.....	7
Friendships	8
Trust and Responsibility	9
Other Considerations.....	10
Resources/References	11

The Teen Brain – “Under Construction”

New research in brain development shows that during the year that a girl is age 11 and the year that a boy is age 12, a rapid period of brain development occurs. These changes will continue until approximately age 24. The areas of the brain affected are:

- The **frontal lobes**, including the prefrontal cortex. These areas control the ability to “see into the future.” This is where decision making in teens can be affected, as they cannot fully understand the long-term consequences of their actions. This area also regulates impulse control.
- The **parietal lobes** and cerebral cortex (outermost layer of the brain). These areas are responsible for logic and spatial reasoning. They also assist with decision making.
- The **temporal lobes**. These areas are associated with language.



- During this time, preteens are also starting to develop **abstract thinking**, beginning to see the world as being more complex.
- According to Erik Erikson, a development psychologist, the developmental task of adolescence is to **identify**: figuring out who they are and where they “fit” in society.

A New Kind of Parenting

Have you noticed changes in your preteen or teen's behaviour? Does your teen seem like a completely different person sometimes? Are the techniques you used with him or her as a child no longer working?

Although your teen may not want you to know this, being present as a parent is just as important as ever; however, the way you parent your teen may look different. Understanding the changes affecting your preteen and teen (e.g., brain development) can help you support him or her.

The good news is that most adolescents make it through and become successful adults. Many – but not all – families will go through a period of “turmoil” during the teen years. We hope the information in this booklet can give you deeper understanding and help you navigate the teen years.

Developmental Assets®

“Developmental Assets are the skills, qualities, opportunities, and relationships that young people need to help them grow into caring, responsible adults” (Search Institute®, 2005).

As a parent, one of the most powerful things you can do is build assets in your preteen or teen. The Search Institute has developed a list of 40 Developmental Assets (see page 5) that youth need to succeed. The more assets a person has, the more likely he or she is to do better in school, make friends, and make healthier decisions. Young people with more assets are also less likely to engage in risk taking behaviour, such as experimenting with drugs or alcohol, or early sexual activity.

The important thing to remember about assets is that by **intentionally** building them, you increase important building blocks for your child's development. Several strategies in this booklet are based on this philosophy.

40 Developmental Assets

External Assets	Internal Assets
Support 1. Family support 2. Positive family communication 3. Other adult relationships 4. Caring neighbourhood 5. Caring school climate 6. Parent involvement in schooling Empowerment 7. Community values youth 8. Youth as resources 9. Service to others 10. Safety Boundaries and Expectations 11. Family boundaries 12. School boundaries 13. Neighbourhood boundaries 14. Adult role models 15. Positive peer influence 16. High expectations Constructive Use of Time 17. Creative activities 18. Youth programs 19. Religious community 20. Time at home	Commitment to Learning 21. Achievement motivation 22. School engagement 23. Homework 24. Bonding to school 25. Reading for pleasure Positive Values 26. Caring 27. Equality and social justice 28. Integrity 29. Honesty 30. Responsibility 31. Restraint Social Competencies 32. Planning and decision making 33. Interpersonal competence 34. Cultural competence 35. Resistance skills 36. Peaceful conflict resolution Positive Identity 37. Personal power 38. Self-esteem 39. Sense of purpose 40. Positive view of personal future

Rudeness and Disrespect

What parents say:

"My daughter doesn't listen to me anymore! I never had any real problems during elementary school, but now I'm seeing changes – especially in her attitude."

"The teachers are telling me that he is disrespectful in class – he is challenging them on everything they say. How come I've never heard this before?"

What's happening?

With the development of the prefrontal cortex comes abstract thinking. Teens begin to question everything they know because they have learned there is more than one way to look at a situation. They are also discovering their own identity and are asking themselves what they believe in. Although they may disagree with you, they still want to have a relationship with you.

What your teen wants you to know:

"I want to know that you care about what I have to say."

Tips for parents

Support

- Say yes more than no.
- Use humour to take the edge off tense situations.
- Ask for his or her opinion when making family decisions.

Empowerment

- Be honest with your teen about what you do not know, and then look for the answers together.

Boundaries and Expectations

- Talk to your teen about sharing opinions in a respectful way. Give him or her examples of this in action.

- Show your teen different sides of the argument.

Social Competence

- Hold a family debate. Set ground rules to ensure everyone will listen and be heard.

Developmental Assets Tie-In

- 1 Family support
- 2 Positive family communication
- 8 Youth as resources
- 11 Family boundaries
- 14 Adult role models
- 16 High expectations
- 32 Planning and decision making

Communication

What parents say:

"When I ask him what's wrong, he shrugs his shoulders and says 'nothing.'"

"My daughter doesn't come to me to ask for advice anymore – she says I wouldn't understand."

What's happening?

As part of developing their own identity, teens start to define themselves and differentiate themselves from their parents. Peers become more important influencers in their opinions and decisions. This is a normal stage of development because friends are the people who are experiencing the same events right now; however, research shows that the parent-teen relationship is as important as ever during these transition years.

What your teen wants you to know:

"I ache for connections with my family."

Tips for parents

Support

- Listen – take the time when your teen comes to you to talk (on his or her terms).
- Have an open door policy. Encourage your teen to come to you with concerns or questions. Be ready to listen and acknowledge your child's feelings.

Constructive Use of Time

- Seize opportunities to do something fun together.

Empowerment

- Ask your teen what the best way to stay in touch is. Sometimes a text message can be an easy reminder instead of a phone call.
- Ask your teen for his or her opinion, for example, "What do you think about that?"

Developmental Assets Tie-In

- 1 Family support
- 2 Positive family communication
- 8 Youth as resources
- 17 Creative activities

Friendships

What parents say:

"I trust my son to make good decisions, but I'm worried about what he will do when his friends are around."

What's happening?

A normal part of adolescence involves teens wanting increasingly more independence from their parents. They are also developing a sense of personal identity and finding more connection with peers. This helps adolescents prepare for adulthood, and means we are doing our job! Even so, many parents are saddened by the change in the relationship.

What your teen wants you to know:

"I feel connected to peers in ways you may not understand."

Tips for parents

Empowerment

- Learn the names of your child's friends. Greet them when you see them.

Support

- Find different ways to stay involved. It's still important. Follow your teen's cues and ask him or her about good ways to show affection (e.g., high five, tap on the back).

Social Competence

- Keep the conversation going: talk to your teen about what it means to be a good friend.

Boundaries and Expectations

- Recognize that your teen may see positive attributes in their friends that you cannot see.
- Be an asset builder: be intentional about getting to know your teen's friends and be a good role model for them.

Developmental Assets Tie-In

- 1 Family support
- 2 Positive family communication
- 7 Community values youth
- 14 Adult role models
- 15 Positive peer influence
- 33 Interpersonal competence

Trust and Responsibility

What parents say:

"He tells me he has no homework. Then the school calls to tell me he has not been handing in his assignments."

"She told me her friend was throwing a party and that her friend's parents would be home. Then I called them and found out they knew nothing about it."

What's happening?

As teens get older, they start wanting more independence and to be treated like adults; however, knowing that their brains are still developing and they are still learning how to handle responsibility helps parents realize that teens are going to make mistakes. Your role is to help guide your teen through a decision, without making it for him or her. It's about getting the balance right between trust and supervision.

What your teen wants you to know:

"I want to be held accountable for my actions."

"When you set reasonable limits, it shows me you care."

Tips for parents

Personal Values and Positive Identity

- Celebrate small successes – comment when your teen does something well or acts responsibly.

Boundaries and Expectations

- Continue to monitor – this means knowing who your teen's friends are, who he or she spends time with, where he or she goes, etc.
- Set reasonable rules and expectations. Talk to your teen about what you expect, and negotiate responsibilities together.

Social Competence

- Plan ahead with your teen for new situations (e.g., first high school party). Talk about your concerns and problem-solve possible scenarios together.

Developmental Assets Tie-In

- 2 Positive family communication
- 11 Family boundaries
- 16 High expectations
- 30 Responsibility
- 32 Planning and decision making
- 35 Resistance skills
- 38 Self-esteem

Other Considerations



Diversity

What your teen wants you to know:

"I like living in a world where people can be different."

This generation of youth has grown up with many kinds of diversity. When parents support the message that everyone has value, no matter how they might be different, teens can feel accepted for who they are.

Newcomer families

Some families experience challenges when they move to Canada. Many youth experience challenges with a "dual identity" as they are going through adolescence, since they want to fit in with their Canadian peers, but also still identify with their home culture. They are also aware of their parents' expectations to maintain the traditions of their culture.

Single parent families

Parenting a teenager on your own can seem like a daunting task, but you are never really alone. Research shows that the more caring adults in your child's life, the more developmental assets he or she will have. Teachers, neighbours, coaches, and family friends can all have an impact on your teen's life. Find supports you trust to discuss your children and your parenting approaches.

Resources/References

Brain Development

Clavier, R. (2005). *Teen Brain, Teen Mind*. What parents need to know to survive the adolescent years. Toronto Key Porter Books.

Strauch, B. (2003). *The Primal Teen*: What the new discoveries about the teenage brain tell us about our kids. New York Anchor Books.

PBS Frontline (2003). *Inside the Teenage Brain*. Available online at www.pbs.org

Preteen and Teen Development

McNeely, C. & Blanchard, J. (2009). *The Teen Years Explained: A Guide to Healthy Adolescent Development*. Centre for Adolescent Health at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Available online at <http://www.jhsph.edu/adolescenthealth>

Schonert-Reichl, K., et al. (2007). *Middle Childhood Inside and Out: The Psychological and Social World of Children 9-12*. University of British Columbia/United Way of the Lower Mainland. Available online at <http://middlechildhoodmatters.blogspot.com>

Ungar, M. (2008). *Today's Teens: Why Parents Matter*. National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Published by the Ministry of Health. Available online at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/nfnts-raise-ado-eng.pdf>

Developmental Assets

For further information on the Developmental Assets, please visit the following websites:

www.search-institute.org

www.lionsquest.ca