

Counselor's Corner

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Inside the Teenage Brain

Parade magazine ran an article entitled, "**What's Really Going On Inside Your Teen's Head,**" and it explained how teenage brain development has a huge impact on teenage behavior. I realize that many of our MS students are not yet teenagers, but this brain development phase really begins with the **onset of puberty**, so if your child isn't there yet, he/she most likely will be before heading to the HS.

If you're already experiencing frustration with the alien that used to be your sweet son or daughter, the information provided in this article will at least give you the reassurance that the behavior is **NORMAL, EXPECTED, and UNAVOIDABLE**. The article ends with these "Stay Sane Strategies" from Jess Shatkin, assistant professor of child and adolescent psychiatry and pediatrics at the NYU Child Study Center:

Remind a distraught child that things will get better. Often during a rough spell, a teenager sees only his or her little world and can't imagine a tough situation changing. "This is where you have to try and modulate the impulsiveness; give empathy but constantly reinforce adult perspective."

Ask your teen to come up with his own solution. "If your child is chronically 'losing' homework, for example, ask what ideas he has for making this better; be open to trying different ideas. This feeds into the teen's desire for autonomy without getting into a blame game."

Educate your child about sleep. Tell your kid you're not trying to enforce a curfew just to be annoying. As little as 40 minutes less sleep a night can cause difficulties in school, including falling asleep in classes.

Don't excuse bad behavior. Understanding the complexities teenagers face isn't the same as saying, "It's fine if my kid is feral." It's not. "We aren't saying teenagers can't be responsible, can't think ahead; it's just that their level of brain development makes it more difficult."