

Understanding your teenager: School health coffee morning

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Agenda

- Understanding the teenage brain
- Why doesn't my teenager sleep?
- Emotional health and containment
- School nurse service
- Online course for further learning
- Time for a cup of tea and questions.

Understanding the teenage brain

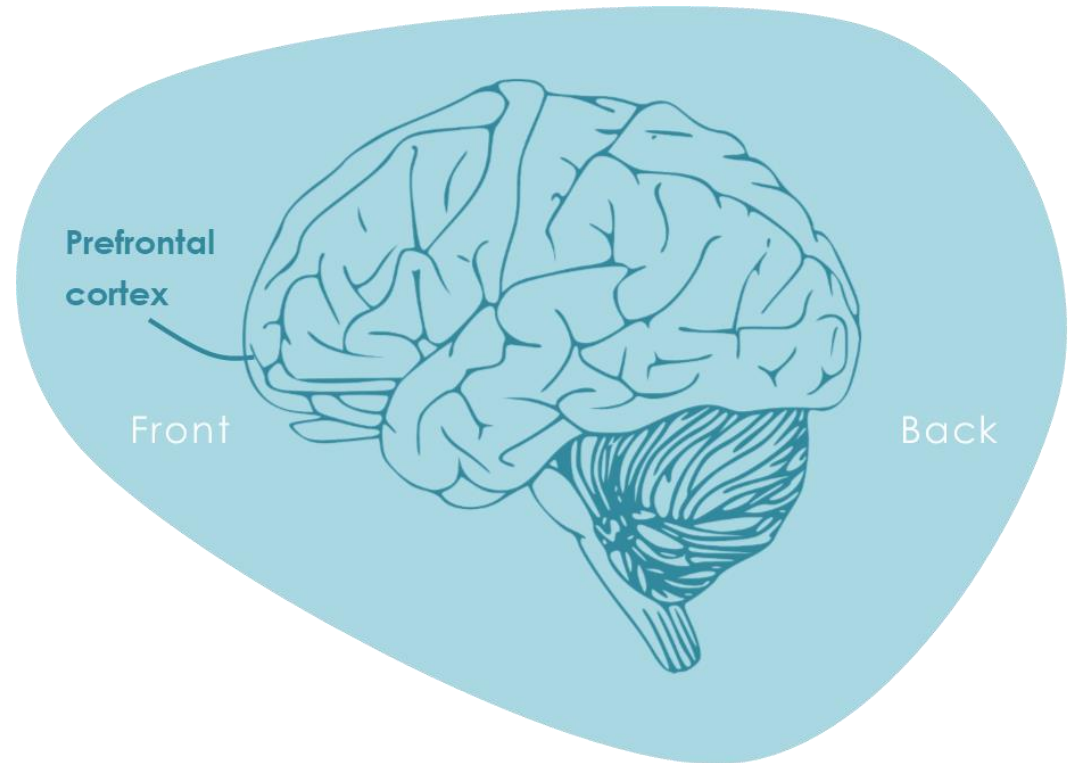
- In order to understand teenagers, we need to understand about how our brains work.
- The biggest time for brain development is in the first 3 years of life, after that it's in our teens!
- The human brain is not fully formed at birth.
- Neurons exist mostly apart from each other.
- Over the next three years of life, the brain makes and strengthens connections in the brain.
- Connections that are not strong are 'pruned'.

Understanding the teenage brain

- Why is infant brain development important us to understand teenagers?
- The same ‘pruning’ and strengthening connections happen again in the teenage brain!
- The foundation blocks for brain development is laid down in the first three years of life.
- This affects concentration, emotional regulation and behaviour.
- Between the ages of 3-10, the brain is storing information, and organizing emotional and learning experiences.

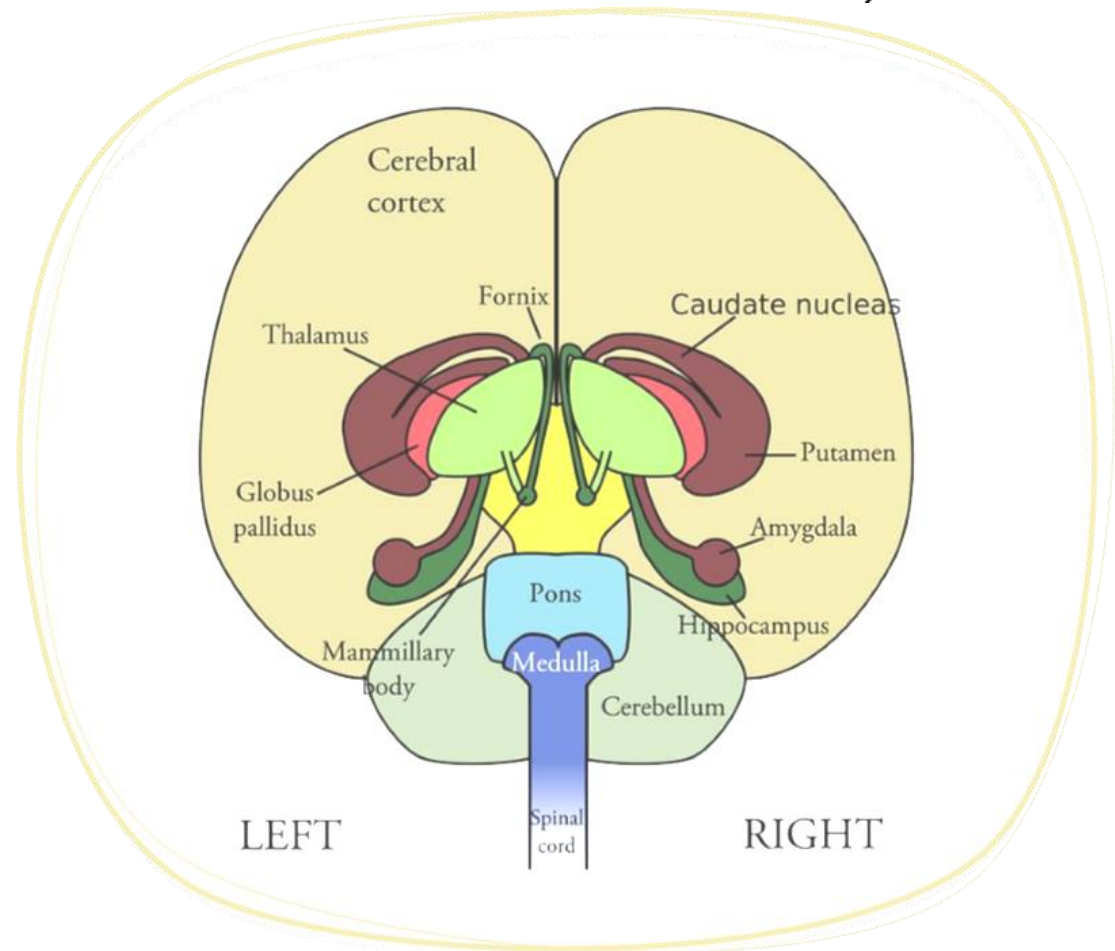
Understanding the teenage brain

- The prefrontal cortex is still growing and developing in teenagers. Therefore, they use this part less than adults!
- Adults use this to think, make judgements, organize ourselves and recognise emotions on people's faces.



Understanding the teenage brain

- The Amygdala is sensitive to danger, this is where we get our 'gut feelings' from.
- In teenage years the ability to speak and read facial expressions is moved from the reasoning part of the brain to the amygdala. Later it moves back.
- 50% of teenagers failed to spot 'fear' in the facial expression test
- This means teenagers can be more impulsive and defensive. Also, they are unable to spot danger as effectively.



Understanding the teenage brain

- In the teenage years, the brain is growing rapidly and can experience periods of 'chaos'.
- Some areas are not fully developed.
- Puberty affects speech and ability to read facial expressions.
- Areas not fully developed: Reasoning, risk taking, goal setting, prioritising needs, organization and impulse inhibition.
- Teenagers read facial expressions differently to adults, we need to verbalise how we feel.

Understanding the teenage brain

- What does this mean for me and my teenager?
- The brain reward system is more active during teenage years which is why they have more risk-taking behaviour. Monitor this, support them to make better choices and explain fully why.
- Teenagers may not be able to cope or react well to change or something unexpected happening. Be aware of this and gain emotional support if needed.



Understanding the teenage brain:

Positives: teenagers have enormous potential. They are open to ideas and able to change as they are less set in their ways.

Teenagers have a greater ability to learn – hence this is when they have their GCSES!

Teenagers sleep



Why doesn't my teenager sleep?

- What is Melatonin?
- Teenagers do not produce melatonin until 1am
- Teenagers need around 9 hours sleep.
- Sleep routine
- Blue light

Foods that naturally contain melatonin: Milk, Nuts, Cherries, Fatty fish, Rice, Oats, Corn, Bananas, Mushrooms.

Foods to avoid: Spicy food, chocolate, tomatoes, pizza and citrus fruits.

Emotional health and containment

As mentioned earlier, the teenage years can be difficult for everyone involved!

- **Physical Containment – offer your teenager a hug if they need it!**
- **Emotional containment – Listen, absorb, give meaning, support.**
- **Evidence suggest that teenagers will feel ‘contained’ and be able to make sense of feelings.**



School Nurse service

- Vicky, School Nurse for Childwall SSA.
- Monthly clinic at school to see young people.
- School nurse referral form.
- Help with anything – If I can't help, I'll refer onto someone that can!



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We are health professionals who work closely with children, young people, carers and school staff to promote health and wellbeing in accordance to the healthy child programme (5 to 19 years and up to 25 years for pupils with special educational needs).



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Cup of tea and questions

- Any Questions?





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How was your experience of the School Nursing - Liverpool Team 3 today?

**Help us learn from your experience, let us
know what we're doing well and
where we need to get better.**

Please complete our short online survey. All responses are anonymous
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a member of staff or contact the Engagement and Experience Team:

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