

Parents & Teachers: 6 Ways to Inspire the Teen Brain

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The teen brain is in a vulnerable state. It is primed to fall into addiction, delve deeply into depression and seek out risky situations. However, the teen years are also a prime time for developing long-term, necessary strategic thinking skills, the foundation for advanced reasoning that should continue to be refined in complexity and maturity throughout adulthood.

The brain undergoes more change during the teenage years than any other time except for the first two months of life. The changes are most dramatic in the frontal lobe networks, the brain's command control center. The frontal lobe networks are responsible for reasoning, planning, decision-making, judgment, inhibiting bad choices, and other high-level cognitive functions. Providing necessary challenges to support development of the frontal lobe networks is key to your teen's ability to achieve future life success.

For years parents and educators have preached, "the more you know, the better." Teens are being trained to stuff facts and regurgitate information, leading to rote memorization and stymied creativity. Such robotic use of the brain is leaving the teen brain uninspired. A time of extraordinary promise and susceptibility, this vital adolescent brain stage merits larger-than-life attention from parents and teachers. The teen brain is primed to create and innovate new ideas.

Elevating brain power during this impressionable life stage of adolescents is imperative to promoting independent life success. Follow the below tips to inspire the best and brightest brain performance and to enhance vital frontal lobe development of your teenager.

- Teach your teen to conceive many unique interpretations of movies, books, political discussions, unsettling school or peer issues, or works of art.
- Encourage your youth to be a problem finder and solution setter for issues that arise daily and discuss how academic content supports this expertise.

- Ask your teenager to give you a “message” from a book or movie or hurtful experience rather than a long-winded retell without reflection.
- Have your adolescent interpret the lyrics of their favorite song from positive and negative perspectives and do the same for your song with them.
- Watch their favorite TV show with them and share different take-home messages for the different characters.
- Push for a multitude of answers to a question or problem versus seeking the “right” answer.

Our brains are wired to be inspired – especially during teen years. Fostering creativity and innovation to tackle difficult and multifaceted problems – in and out of school – will drive successful futures of our youth for generations to come. As Einstein once said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”