

Worlds Apart

What Works in Adolescent

Treatment and Why

Presented By

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Who am I and Why am I here?

At the completion of this brief workshop, participants will:

Participants in this session will be able to:

1. Identify the fundamental developmental task of adolescence, why knowing this task matters, and how to leverage it effectively in prevention, intervention, and treatment.
2. Verbalize the vulnerabilities particular to adolescent development related to substance use and behaviors.
3. Articulate an understanding of the role of family, support systems, and traditional and social media in adolescence and how to help build support for the adolescents we serve.

Who are you and why are you here?

Who are you and why are you here?

What would it take?

Who are you and why are you here?



Rome

Generational Quiz:

Please answer the following question in groups of 3-4 people.

- What was a controversial music artist/band you remember from when you were younger?

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**There are lots of thoughts
out there on adolescents
and how to work with
them.**

**Mark Twain had a few
thoughts.....**

What is adolescence?

- According to Encarta World English Dictionary adolescence is:

1. time preceding adulthood: the period from puberty to adulthood in human beings

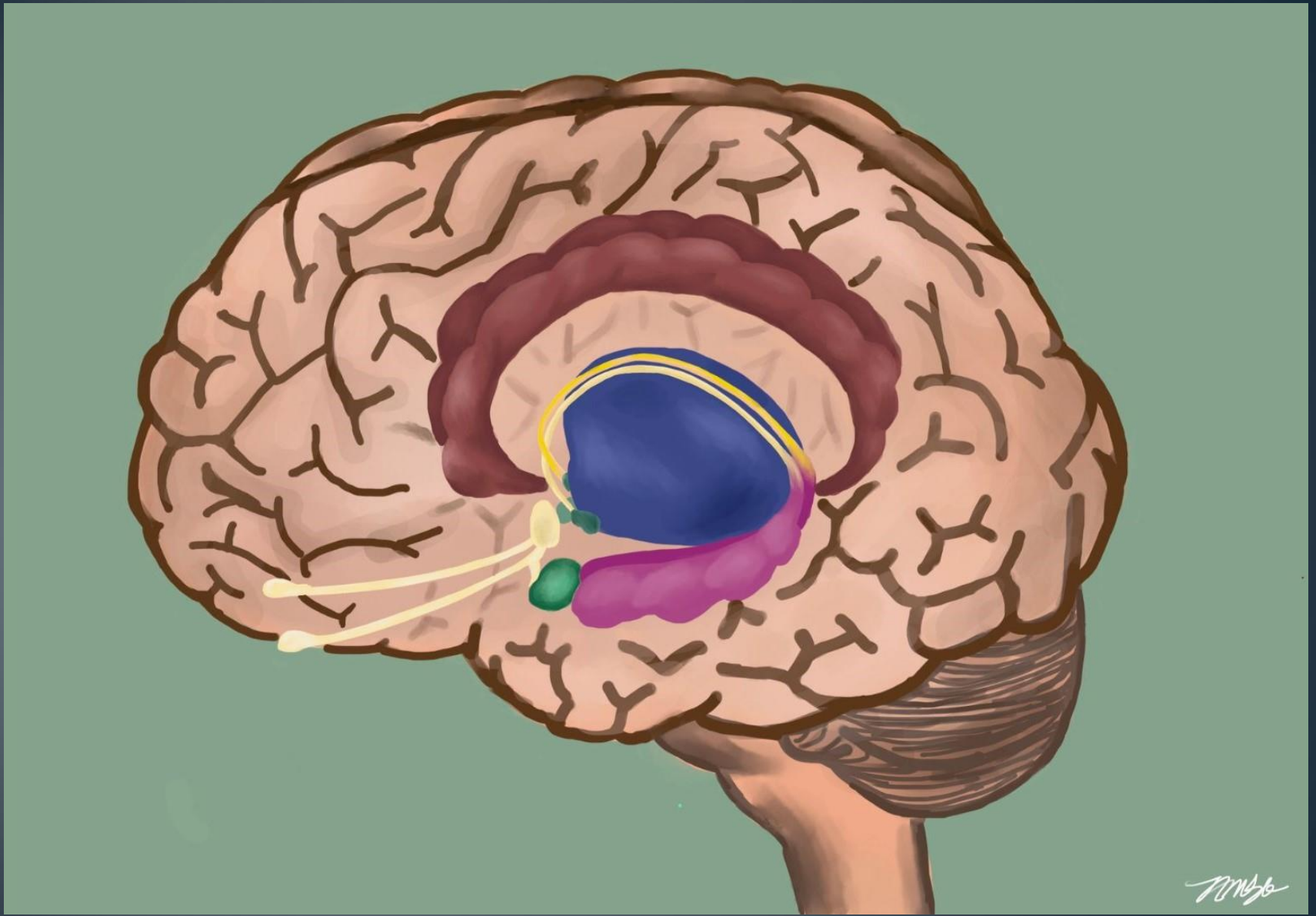
“Amazing Observation” 1

- **Adolescents are not adults.**
- Adolescents have a hard time remembering that fact.
 - So do their families.
 - So do we.

The Adolescent Brain

- Driven to learn
- Complicated beyond imagination

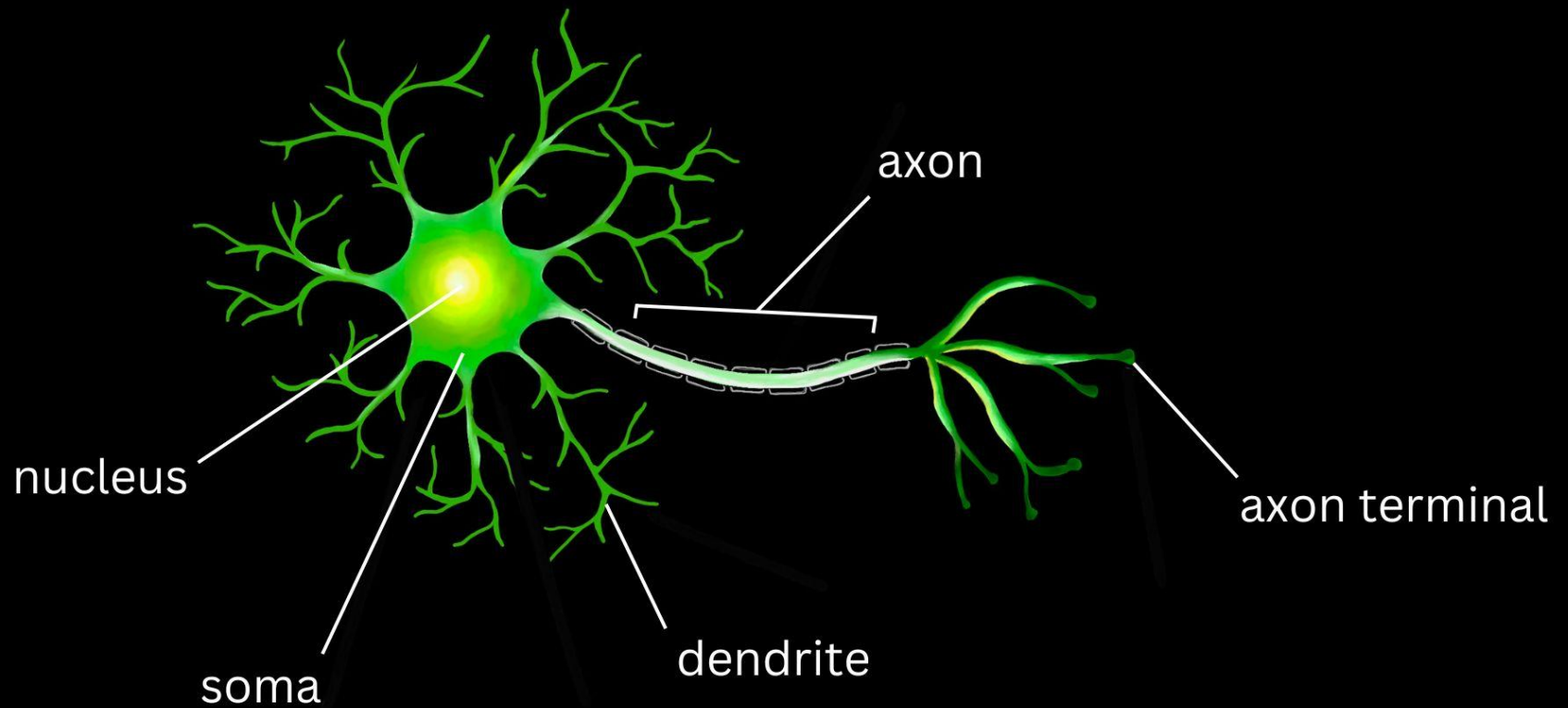
Adolescents do not think like adults.



This illustration is used with permission from the artist, Natalie Schrader Gilstrap.

Brain development

- Tremendous acceleration of neuronal growth throughout the second trimester.
- Age 6 to 10 marks another dramatic period of neuronal growth.
- Beginning in early adolescence neuronal density declines and pruning rate increases.



This illustration is used with permission from the artist, Natalie Schrader Gilstrap.

“Amazing Observation” 2

- Adolescents are literally losing their minds...and developing it!
- As dendrites are pruned in adolescence the brain becomes more efficient at what it does repetitively.

BUT

It is losing some of its “liquid” thinking.

Question:

What are the pros and
cons of this “pruning”
process?

Adolescence, not Puberty

- Puberty – secondary sex characteristics develop and potential for reproduction is attained.
- Reached earlier than previous generations
- Not to be confused with adolescence
- Adolescence lasting longer
- We have a development gap

- Biology parallels the psychological and social requirements of adolescents. (Goleman)

The Adolescent Brain

- The adolescent brain is different from the adult brain.
- It is geared to learn.
- Nucleus Accumbens (NA) - the brain's novelty alarm bell and part of the brain's reward pathway.
- During first decade of life, energy is focused on growth in this area particularly the increase of dopamine receptors.

The Adolescent Brain

- As kids move into adolescence, the “energy” in the NA drops - decrease in dopamine receptor sensitivity levels (White,2003).

-How hard is to make a child laugh?

- Adolescents often look bored and depressed.

The Adolescent Brain

- Kids need more external stimulation to activate the NA which leads to risk taking.
- We need our kids out of the nest and exploring their world.
- The adolescent brain is hard wired to seek more stimulation and novelty.

“Amazing Observation” 3

- Adolescents are not young adults; they are big kids.

The Adolescent Brain

- Adolescents have a biological mandate to explore their world.
- During adolescence growth in the central core of the brain is solidifying (learning/emotion).
- There is increased activity in the prefrontal cortex (the judgment/planning center).
- The connections between the learning/emotional center of the brain and its judgment center are strengthening.

Generational Quiz:

Please answer the following question in groups of 3-4 people.

- What was a defining fashion or style during your adolescent years?

Without Novelty...

Boredom is deadly.

Adolescent Brain Development

- If we do not take advantage of the brain's ability to learn during adolescence the window narrows. Why?
- Intellectual stimulation and relational connection are central to adolescent maturation.
- Emotional safety and relational connection increase learning capacity. Why?

The Adolescent Brain

- Experiences that challenge the adolescent emotionally, physically, and intellectually take advantage of this novelty need.
- Combined with purposeful awareness activities, experiential techniques increase prefrontal maturation.
- **Energy** in explicit and implicit memory can be channeled to override previous and unproductive behavioral patterns.

“Amazing Observation” 4

Drugs do not help the
process.

Add **nicotine** to the mix

- One dosing episode increased genetic activity (mRNA for arc and c-fos) that increases dendrite formation and synaptogenesis in adults and adolescents. (Landry, U. of Wisconsin, 2006)
- Adolescent brain response was twice that of the adult brain, particularly in the PFC (Schochet, 2006)
- Adolescent brain “learns” the re-enforcement with greater energy. (memories are more powerful)
- **Nicotine is the gateway drug and seems to prime the brain for addictions to other substances independent of genetic heritage.**

The Adolescent Brain

what gets in the way of learning

- Alcohol negatively impacts the hippocampus (Swartzwelder, DUMC).
- Alcohol negatively impacts the prefrontal cortex particularly during binge use (Crews, UNC).
- Alcohol blocks long-term potentiation and leads to blackouts (White, DUMC).
- Alcohol interferes with memory migration.
- This impact may be life long (Wilson, et.all., DUMC).

The Adolescent Brain

what gets in the way of learning

- It's not just the alcohol that is the problem.
- After four or more drinks (1 beer 12 oz, one glass of wine, or 1.5 oz of liquor) the adolescent brain experiences significant stress through withdrawal. (Pendergast U.of K.)
- Younger brain tissue is up to five times more sensitive to over excitability during withdrawal. (Pendergast U.of K.)

The Adolescent Brain

what gets in the way of learning

- IQ can be significantly impacted by a pattern of binge use, (S. Brown, U. Cal.at San Diego).
- Just two years of binge use can lower IQ as much as 10%, (S. Brown, U. Cal. at San Diego).
- It is the binge use pattern of alcohol that is exactly what has been documented as normative with in the adolescent population, (Weslcher, Harvard).

The Adolescent Brain

what gets in the way of learning

The brain images below show how alcohol may harm teen mental function. Compared with a young non-drinker, a 15-year-old with an alcohol problem showed poor brain activity during a memory task. This finding is noted by the lack of pink and red coloring.



Image from Susan Tapert, PhD, University of California, San Diego.

(A. White)

Addiction

- Over diagnosed in adolescents (who come to treatment)
- A devastating and misunderstood disease
- Treatable but not curable
- Multi-systemic
- Long term treatment
- Address co-mingling disorders
- Recovering family and community

The Adolescent Brain

- Environments are ideally safe and free from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.
 - **The power of family systems cannot be overlooked.**
- If an adolescent resides with or returns to a family system that has not changed there is a powerful “gravitational” pull toward regression and relapse.
- Successful interventions require significant time to solidify lasting change.

“Amazing Observation” 5

Adolescents need support to be healthy.

More often than not, the adolescent you meet is a symptom of the problem and not the problem itself.

What is the primary function
of adolescence?

- Consider this...

Coolness is subjective.

**This is a
generation gap.**

(Is this a new concept?)

“The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers.”

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~Socrates 470-399 B.C.

How Can We Support the Adolescent Brain and Development?

- Develop longer more general life skills: stress management and mindfulness, getting social support and asking for help, increasing physical activity, building study skills, nutrition, team work and a sense of belonging.
- Altruism
- Use influential role models (family is the most important).
- Capitalize on relational and emotional impact on memory.
- Help adolescents make positive memories.
- Use the power of families.

Asking for help...

Any body seen mom and dad?

A love-hungry brain will not
listen to reason

A Word To Counselors (and Parents)

- Adolescents need our support to grow up healthy.
- If only our adolescents change, it will be MUCH harder for them to maintain the changes in other environments.
- You cannot out-teach, out-counsel, or out-parent addiction.
- You cannot control behavior, but you absolutely can influence it.
- Build the relationship with our adolescents.

“Amazing Observation” 6

Adolescent treatment should not look like
adult treatment.

Differences in Working with Adolescence

1. **Effective adolescent treatment should be done by someone who actually likes adolescents and can engage with them.**
2. **Effective adolescent treatment must take advantage of “novelty needs”.**
3. **Effective adolescent treatment should take learning styles into account (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic).**
4. **Effective adolescent treatment must take developmental tasks into consideration.**
5. **Effective adolescent treatment must include and impact systems in which the adolescent is engaged.**

**What Environments
are Adolescents
Drawn to?**

Clubs

Prom

The Great Outdoors

Concerts

Games

WOW!

Doesn't this look and
sound just like our
groups?

Cutting Edge...

So, what's the problem with that?


Many of our teens usually don't excel here.

Why do we refuse to apply what we all know?

How about your offices, group rooms, and facilities?

- Are they inviting to adolescents?
- Are they inviting to families?
- Do they allow for creativity?
- Do they provide adequate space for adolescents of different genders or backgrounds?

Let's Think About It

- ▶ Let's consider what we are doing to engage our young people, systems and families that isn't working.
 - ▶ Let's consider what we are doing to engage our young people, systems and families that is working.
 - ▶ What could we do to better engage young people, systems and families ?
- 

Media

What makes up media in the adolescent world?

Are we engaging our young
people where they are?

How in touch are we with their
world?

Bridging the gap
between the worlds...

Things to Consider:

- How can we increase novelty in our groups and sessions?
- How can we encourage adolescents to teach us their culture?
- How can we use technology to support young people in their growth and recovery?

Learning Styles

Visual

Auditory

Kinesthetic

Engaging Families in Treatment and Recovery



Closing thoughts

Evaluation Link

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