

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Understanding the teenage brain, the impact of trauma, and how you can build belonging with adolescents.



Safe Families

BASIC NEEDS

Basic needs Young People look to have fulfilled are: Belonging, Power, Enjoyment and Independence. During this time of tremendous social and emotional growth, these needs are even stronger.

1. Sense of belonging friendships - connection.

Belonging means feeling like a part of something, being accepted. More broadly at Safe Families we understand this as giving a sense of being seen heard and understood.

2. Power Purpose - recognising accomplishments achievement (in whatever sphere).

Power describes the need for success, for making one's own decisions, for having self efficacy.

3. Independence - freedom to choose and learning responsibility.

Independence is all about having control over one's life and being autonomous. That move from childhood to adulthood.

4. Enjoyment - fun and relaxed re-charge.

Enjoyment is having fun or seeking excitement

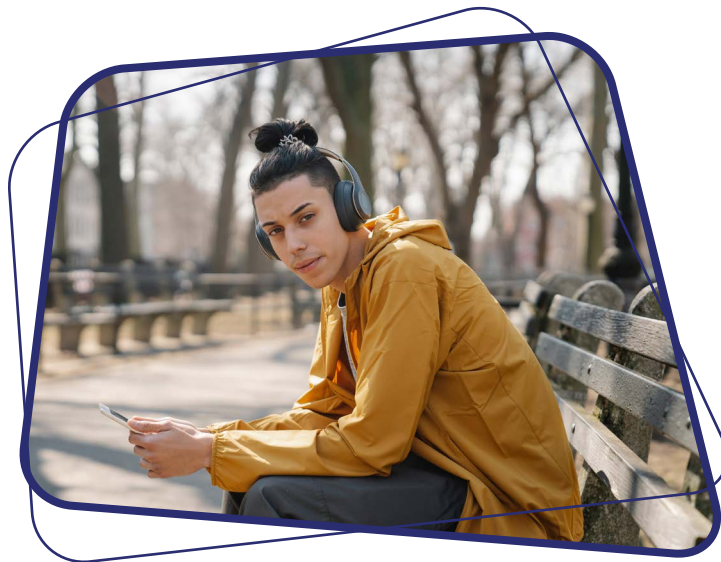
BRAIN DEVELOPMENT DURING ADOLESCENCE

There are significant changes in Brain development and architecture during the Teenage years and into the early twenties.

There are 2 parts of the brain that drive behaviour - **the limbic system** and the **pre frontal cortex**. Both areas are changing significantly.

We know that all brains develop on a basis of use it or lose it – This is the brain’s way of becoming more efficient. Unused connections in the thinking and processing part of the child’s brain (called the grey matter) are **‘pruned’ away** and at the same time, other connections are strengthened the more the new pathways are used, the stronger and more forged they become.

This pruning process **begins in the back of the brain**. The front part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, is remodelled last so this decision-making part of the brain, responsible for a ability to plan and think about the consequences of actions, solve problems and control impulses is the last part fully formed – changes in this part of the brain continue well into early adulthood



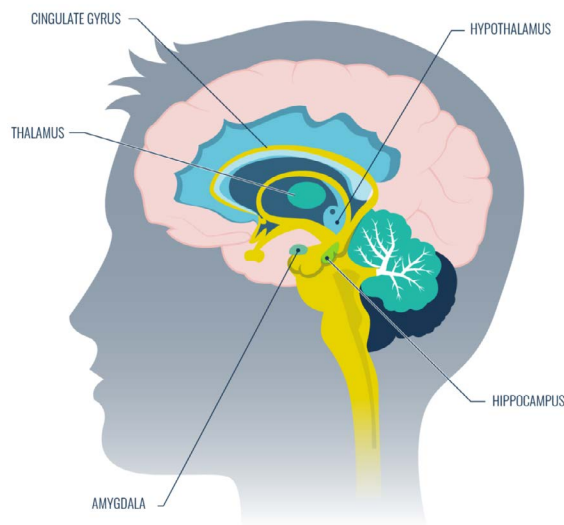
THE LIMBIC SYSTEM

- the emotional centre for the brain – which controls emotional responses and regulation, behaviour and mood, motivation and visceral responses involved in pleasure, such as sexual desire or hunger.

It is also the part of the brain involved when it comes to the behaviours needed for survival – for example responses to fear our fight, flight, freeze responses.

Psychologists now recognize that the limbic system serves a lot more functions than previously believed, including the formation and storage of memories and learning. It plays an important role in the body’s response to stress and is highly connected to our hormones and autonomic nervous system – heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, sexual desire, digestion – things we are not in conscious control of.

THE PARTS OF THE BRAIN THAT MAKE UP THE LIMBIC SYSTEM AND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DRIVING BEHAVIOUR PARTICULARLY IN YOUNG PEOPLE, ARE:



The Hippocampus – This plays a role in our learning, memory and ability to compare sensory information to expectations.

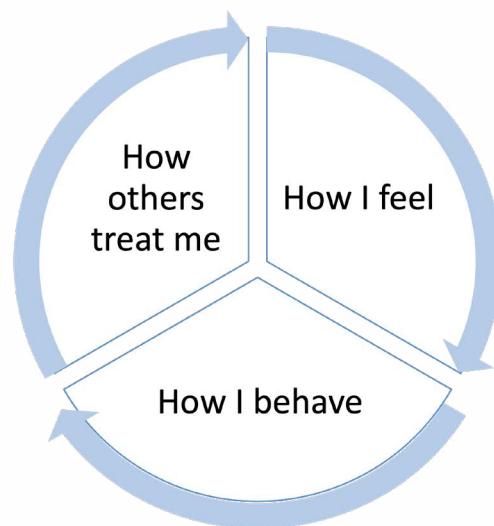
The Hypothalamus – Regulates hormones, emotional responses such as fear and aggression alongside appetites and sexual behaviour. It acts as your body's smart control coordinating centre.

The Amygdala - Key in how we respond to threats and challenges – primarily it is involved in the processing of emotions and memories associated with fear or pleasure. It is associated with our motivation, fear response and interpretation of non-verbal emotional expressions and instinctive behaviour. Because their prefrontal cortex is still developing, teenagers may rely more on their amygdala to make decisions and solve problems than adults do.

All these areas are being pruned and new connections are being made.

The pre-frontal cortex is the part of the brain that is the last to change -the last area to become fully mature. It takes a long time – which means during the adolescent years young people are primarily using their limbic system, their emotional centre to make sense of the world. So mood swings are to be expected - they have more ready access to their emotional centre than their thinking centre, which can make them impulsive.

THE CYCLE OF SELF ESTEEM



THINGS THAT BUILD RESILIENCE



GOOD PHYSICAL HEALTH



POSITIVE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



POSITIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



PLAYING AND TAKING PART IN ACTIVITIES



FEELING LOVED. TRUSTED, VALUED, UNDERSTOOD AND SAFE



FEELING HOPEFUL AND OPTIMISTIC



LEARNING AND HAVING OPPORTUNITIES TO SUCCEED



A SENSE OF BELONGING

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



GOOD COMMUNICATION



MUTUAL RESPECT



TRUST



HONESTY



EQUALITY



BEING YOURSELF

ACKNOWLEDGING YOUNG PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS

- Do try and give them your full attention
- Do summarise once they have finished
- Do explore if the young person is able to identify the emotion.
- Do give them time to process and calm down
- Don't dismiss your young person's emotions as trivial or unimportant. Validation is important.

CREATING A CIRCLE OF SECURITY

Attending to the emotion Paying attention it's a cue. Noticing what is going on for the young person.

Validating the emotion

Accepting how someone else feels – demonstrating that it makes sense to you how they feel given the experience / the situation. Validate – conveying understanding of their emotional need. Proving that you get it.

Labelling

Demonstrating understanding by putting into words what you can see – you don't have to be right – 'it looks to me like you're feeling sad' – it provides an opportunity for the Young person to agree or disagree or at least notice you have noticed.

Meeting the need

Soothing, protecting, listening

Helping – helping this is the last step, when often we want it to be the first, but fixing it immediately is not empowering and doesn't necessarily lead to that sense of self efficacy or build resilience. The crucial piece is ensuring that the person feels listened to and understood. Last of all we can ask how can we help?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN SUPPORTING A YOUNG PERSON

BOUNDARIES

Think about a young person you may be supporting what boundaries would you want to establish with them:

Where do you want to draw the line?

How will you communicate that?

BEING A ROLE MODEL

Give some thought to what kind of person you wished you had had in your younger life or the qualities you think would be important for a young person today.

SAFEGUARDING

You can make a difference by helping young people and their families belong. Whether by intervening earlier on in life to connect families into positive community settings, or by supporting a young person directly as they navigate the teen years and develop into a young adult.

There may be times that the teen you are supporting contacts you outside of agreed support. We ask that you do not respond to a crisis and utilise our Safe Families team, in and outside of working hours to offer support and guidance around how best to respond to any requests for support outside of what has been agreed.

Remember your role – you are there to support, not to be the lead professional. Your communication is crucial in helping provide safety and belonging to young people and their families.

REMEMBER THE 4 ‘R’S OF SAFEGUARDING:



RECOGNISE

Recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and harm taking place.



RESPOND

Do something. Appropriate response is vital. This could be listening sensitively when a young person wants to tell you that abuse is going on or something is worrying them or when you observe or hear something that concerns you. Then moving quickly to the 3rd R (Record). The bottom line here is don't delay. Whatever your response is you should do it immediately.



RECORD

Record everything you have seen and heard immediately on the database and flag it as a safeguarding concern. It may also be appropriate to call the Safe Families Team.



REFER

At this point we will then deal with the concern and escalate appropriately.

Please familiarise yourself with our Safeguarding policy and behaviour management policy on your volunteer database and seek any advice and guidance from your family support manager if you have any questions

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

There are a number of other organisations providing support to young people, particularly supporting young people with their mental health. Here are some charities and organisations we recommend.



youngminds.org.uk

Care for mental health in young people



selfharm.co.uk

Free online self-harm support for 11-19's



childline.org.uk

Support for anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through



kooth.com

Digital mental health and wellbeing



samaritans.org

24 hour call in support



www.renewwellbeing.org.uk



papyrus-uk.org

Dedicated to the prevention of suicide and the promotion of positive mental health.



nspcc.org.uk

Care for mental health in children



giveusashout.org

Free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone struggling to cope.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

We offer a selection of additional training and events designed to help you as you look to support children and families, whatever that might look like for you.

FIND OUT MORE AND REGISTER AT
safefamilies.uk/training



EVERYONE DESERVES TO BELONG



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