

*Peer approval has been shown to be highly rewarding to the teen brain:*

**Advantage:** social belonging promotes well being

**Disadvantage:** Teens are more likely to take risks when other teens are around.

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## Communicating with your teen:

### What doesn't work:

- \* Arguing, lecturing, nagging
- \* Analyzing or judging them for their thoughts.
- \* Talking about their mood swings and creating defensiveness
- \* Pressuring
- \* Hitting or using other forms of violence
- \* Banning certain social contacts

### What works:

- \* Create an accepting and open atmosphere
- \* Ask open ended questions
- \* Control your emotional reactivity
- \* Make the conversation a win-win experience
- \* Guide them without forcing
- \* Be alert to their actions—actions speak louder than words
- \* Be patient
- \* Don't expect what they can not deliver—set realistic expectations



## Tips for having the difficult talk:

- Choose a place that provides an “out”
- Choose a safe place
- Avoid distractions
- Begin the discussion with a soft voice
- Demonstrate respect for your teen
- Let your teen speak first
- Don't interrupt
- Consider their perspective carefully
- Reflect back
- Watch your tone and body language
- Explain what you want and why
- Fight fair
- Take a break when needed to keep tempers cool and return when calm
- Keep the main issue in perspective
- Don't compare your teen to anyone: alive or dead

*When talking fails write a letter or email*

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Peer support can be helpful to parents. Sometimes professional consultation is needed. Talk to a therapist.

**Anita McLean, Ph.D., Psy.D.**  
20 Nassau Street  
Suite 221  
Princeton, NJ 08542

**Phone: 732-319-9104**  
website: [dranitamclean.com](http://dranitamclean.com)  
E-mail: [amclean845@gmail.com](mailto:amclean845@gmail.com)

## Promoting Success Reducing Stress

**Tips for  
Immigrant  
Parents of  
Bicultural Teens**



**Anita McLean, Ph.D., Psy.D.**  
**732-319-9104**

## What stresses out teens?

Data suggest that the greatest sources of stress for teens are parents. This type of stress can stem from high expectations, family problems, unstable living conditions, neglect and-or utter avoidance of "family time."

Teenagers are dealing with a high level of social, emotional and cognitive flux and have underdeveloped abilities to cope. Taken together, these changes may make teens:

- Vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviors
- Mis-perceive social cues
- Misunderstand emotional messages from adults
- Feel highly self conscious
- Vulnerable to peer influence and pressure
- Vulnerable to stress
- Vulnerable to mental health problems

***Bi-cultural demands at the adolescent developmental stage can generate conflict and harmful stress.***

Let them sleep!



*The body of a teen needs 9-10 hours of sleep. Their circadian rhythms are such that their bodies to get up later and stay up later. Sleep- is critical for brain reorganization and deprivation worsens moodiness and cloudy decision-making.*

## Understanding the teenage years

**The teenage brain:** The brain continues to change throughout life, but there are huge leaps in development during adolescence. The limbic system develops faster than the pre-frontal cortex.

In other words, The "brakes" of good judgment and forethought come online somewhat later than the "accelerator" of the brain which gives rise to intense experiences of rage, fear, aggression (including towards oneself), excitement and sexual attraction.

### **Add in the hormonal changes:**

Hormonal changes are affecting the teen body in significant ways and dealing with these changes can be overwhelming and challenging in its own right.

- The adolescent brain pours out adrenal stress hormones, sex hormones, and growth hormone, which in turn influence brain development.
- The production of testosterone increases 10 times in adolescent boys.
- Sex hormones act in the limbic system and in the raphe nucleus, source of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which is important for the regulation of arousal and mood," reports Harvard Mental Health
- Issues of sexuality, gender, sexual orientation, are to be expected.

### **Add in Cultural demands:**

As Asian and immigrant parents we may have:

- An overwhelming desire for our children to succeed academically
- A strong wish for our teens to remain closely connected to the family
- A suspicion of privacy, independence and autonomy
- Fears regarding drug and alcohol use and sexual activity
- Concerns about moral development.

## The psychological tasks of adolescence

Identity consolidation and the development of independence and autonomy are the psychological tasks of adolescence.

*What kind of person do I want to be and what type of place do I want the world to be?*

This requires them to turn away from their parents who have thus far defined them to find out who they are on their own. It is normal for them to reject parental dictates and develop their own.

***Teens need their parents and parents can help!***

## What can you do as a parent?

- ◇ Normalize: Expect and understand what is normal
- ◇ Offer acceptance: Make sure your teen knows that you appreciate his or her efforts as well as accomplishments.
- ◇ Avoid hurtful teasing or criticism.
- ◇ Respect privacy and need for independence
- ◇ Pick your battles
- ◇ Practice empathy
- ◇ Be a good role model
- ◇ Start with trust
- ◇ Make appropriate rules and involve your teen
- ◇ Show you care and encourage family time
- ◇ Manage your own pressure for success and fear of failure
- ◇ Let them sleep—they need 9-10 hours and have shifted circadian rhythms so they get up later and stay up later