

PROMOTING SUCCESS, REDUCING STRESS



How to Help Your Teenager
through High School

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ADDRESSING YOUR NEEDS

- ◉ What do you want for your children?
- ◉ What do you want from this workshop?

WHAT OUR KIDS ARE SAYING

All adolescents feel

My parents don't understand me!



MORE IMPORTANTLY

- ◉ ***Teens Think Parents Don't Understand Stress In Their Lives***
 - *Pressure to do well in school and meet other responsibilities leaves teens feeling they do not have enough time to pursue personal interests and satisfy their need for acceptance and friendship.*
 - *This heavily influences decisions they make about tobacco use, drugs and sex.*
- ◉ ***The teens believe families often create problems rather than solve them. Parents, they say, don't seem to understand teens, or don't listen, or are too strict.....***
 - Reported in the Seattle Times, 2/6/2014



ASIAN ADOLESCENTS FEEL

- ◉ My parents don't understand me (*like other teens*)

and

(in addition)

- ◉ My Asian parents do not know what it is like to grow up in America
- ◉ They have impossible expectations and cultural rules that don't work here
- ◉ They won't be able to help me since they don't know how to negotiate American culture



POSSIBLE OUTCOMES



- Either we deal with it.....

When two sides have a different agenda and we do not understand and have empathy for each other it leads to conflict.



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- Or we don't deal with it



EITHER WAY

We lose the relationship....



A HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE?





SOME FACTS....

- ◉ Adolescents need their parents since they are still developing ... emotionally, cognitively, and psychologically
- ◉ They are in a complex situation which can be overwhelming
- ◉ We need to help them develop effective skills to succeed - to succeed in America while maintaining our cultural values
- ◉ This is a difficult task
- ◉ Not growing up in American culture puts parents at a disadvantage

OVERCOMING THE DISADVANTAGE...

- This disadvantage can be overcome by:
 - educating ourselves
 - developing an open, respectful relationship with our teenagers
 - being open to learn from them and developing empathy
 - Developing effective communication strategies to both transmit our values but also to hear them, understand them and help them adapt



AGENDA FOR THE DAY



1. Understanding the issue
2. Developing empathy
3. Building effective relationships
4. Improving communication

After Today

Ongoing help - Support group and other ways of getting peer support, ideas and help

THE TEENAGE BRAIN



- The brain continues to change throughout life, but there are huge leaps in development during adolescence.
- An asymmetric development occurs:
 - Changes in the **limbic system** occur first along with hormonal changes of puberty
 - The development of the **prefrontal cortex** comes after the limbic system.

EMOTIONAL CHANGES

- ◉ Puberty associated changes in the limbic system may give rise to intense experiences of rage, fear, aggression (including towards oneself), excitement and sexual attraction....
“accelerator of the brain”
- ◉ The “**brakes**” - of good judgment and forethought - come online somewhat later with the development of the prefrontal cortex

In other words, emotional reactivity without adequate consideration of consequences and an ability to think through options is physiologically normal for our teens! It makes them:

emotionally volatile

moody

risk takers

Self conscious

lacking in organization, planning, time management



ADD IN THE HORMONES

- ◉ **Hormonal changes are affecting the teen body in significant ways as well** 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, orientation, are to be expected.**



FORCES OUT OF CONTROL



- ◉ Teenagers are dealing with a huge amount 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
 - Highly self conscious
 - Vulnerable to peer influence and pressure
 - Vulnerable to stress
 - Vulnerable to mental health problems

FRIENDS AND PEERS ARE IMPORTANT



- ◉ **Peer approval has been shown to be highly rewarding** to the teen brain and they are more likely to take risks when other teens are around....Kids are really concerned with looking cool

- ◉ **Not all peer influence is bad:**
 - Friends also provide teens with **opportunities to learn skills** such as negotiating, compromise and group planning.
 - They are **practicing adult social skills** in a safe setting and they are really not good at it at first. So even if all they do is sit around with their friends, teens are hard at work acquiring important life skills.
 - Friends also understand and share the experience, **provide support, have empathy, are accepting**....unlike parents.
 - Issues of **belonging** to a group or being an outsider cause considerable emotional impact and having friends is emotionally stabilizing

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 normative for them to reject parental dictates and develop their own.*

ADD TO THIS - BICULTURAL DEMANDS

- As Asian parents our demands are different.
- We want our children to succeed:
 - Academically
 - Remain connected to the family
- We are suspicious of privacy, independence and autonomy
- We are worried about drug and alcohol use
- We are concerned about moral development.



SOME CONFLICTS



American culture expects:

- All rounded development
- Demonstrate independence in thought and action
- Demonstrate autonomy in decision making
- Demonstrate creativity and uniqueness
- Take risks, experiment, make choices
- Develop peer relationships and test sexual identity

We expect them to:

- Be academically successful
- Remain connected to the family & consult with us before taking action
- Discuss issues and rely on us for decision making
- Stick with the tried and true
- Play it safe, not take risk, take our advice
- Limit social circle especially when it comes to dating



WHAT ARE WE AFRAID OF?

ACTING OUT OF FEAR



Results in a tendency to:

- **Attack** : *e.g. criticize American culture, values, mores; criticize American friends of our teen, forbid certain kinds of activities*
- **Freeze**: *e.g. feel overwhelmed, out of control, and helpless which can cause us to try to persuade, bargain with, nag, beg, withdraw affection*
- **Flee**: *e.g. avoid, ignore, or deny problems that appear, send the teen to home country, give up*
- **Pressure**: *The most common strategy used by Asian parents is exert pressure on their teen to succeed academically at all costs and maintain that as the exclusive focus force our child to study harder, deny permission to do certain things*

STRESS IN OUR TEENS

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



STRESS HAS HARMFUL EFFECTS

- ◉ If teen stress is not dealt with properly, the chance of them engaging in '*worsening*' *behavior* increases.
- ◉ Roughly half of all 12 to 17-year-olds leave their homes during school nights, most of the time without their parents being aware: Columbia University report.
- ◉ The risk that teens will **smoke, drink or use illegal drugs** increases if they are highly stressed, frequently bored or have substantial amounts of spending money: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University.
- ◉ An unfortunate result of teen stress can be **depression**. This can become a serious issue that could result in the teen hurting themselves or others.



ACADEMIC SUCCESS IS IMPORTANT

- ◉ When it occurs at the cost of all round development the teens are not prepared for life in the American culture.
- ◉ It can lead to:
 - Depression and anxiety
 - Self harm and suicidality
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Delinquency and school drop-out
 - Sexual acting out
 - Internet and other addictions
 - Family conflict and other interpersonal problems





SOME STATISTICS:

Self Harm	6.7%
Anxiety Disorder	8%
Depressive Disorder	11%
Trial of illegal drugs before 8 th gr	27%
Alcohol before 8 th gr	41%

In 2009, suicide was the third leading cause of death for young people ages 15-24. In this age group, suicide accounted for 14.4 percent of all deaths in 2009.

ARE ASIAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS MORE VULNERABLE?



- ◉ NAMI reports:
- ◉ 30 percent of Asian American females in 5th through 12th grade reported symptoms of depression, as compared to Non-Hispanic whites (22.5 percent), African American (17 percent) or Hispanic females (27 percent).
- ◉ Asian American adolescent boys are twice as likely as Non-Hispanic whites to be physically abused.



TEENS NEED THEIR PARENTS

- Teens need people with the more stable adult brain to:
 - help them by staying calm,
 - listening
 - being good role models
 - help them with their specific developmental vulnerabilities
 - support them and provide structure
 - limit their behavior to steady them
- They want and need to be able to communicate with their parents in healthy, positive ways.

WHAT TO DO?



- **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:** Understand that your child is growing up and needs guidance. But as you guide your child's behavior, also make an effort to respect his or her growing need for independence and privacy.
- **Pick Your Battles :** It's a lot better to let them do something temporary and harmless; leave the objections to things that really matter, like tobacco, drugs and alcohol, or permanent changes to their appearance.

- ◉ **Practice empathy:** Help your child understand his/her own ups and downs...it's normal to be a bit concerned or self-conscious, and that it's OK to feel grown-up one minute and like a kid the next.
- ◉ **Be a good role model,** especially when dealing with stress and other life difficulties, as teens are actively trying to figure out their own coping strategies. Your adolescent is watching you!
- ◉ **Don't treat them as adults:** Show respect for their opinions and thoughts. However, they are not in charge and do not yet have the wherewithal to make adult judgment calls.
- ◉ **Start with trust.** Let your teen know that you trust him or her. Reward your teen for being trustworthy. But, if the trust gets broken he or she may enjoy fewer freedoms until the trust is rebuilt.
- ◉ **Make Appropriate Rules and Involve them:** The more they are involved in the process, the more likely they will be to follow those rules. It also communicates that their thoughts and ideas are important.



- ◉ **Show you care**. Even though young teens may not always show it, they still need to know that they are important to their parents. Make it a point to regularly spend one-on-one time with your child—time when you can give him or her your loving, undivided attention.
- ◉ **Encourage a reasonable amount of family time together**. Decide what your expectations are, and don't be insulted when your growing child doesn't always want to be with you
- ◉ **Draw the line**. Set clear, realistic expectations for your child's behavior. Establish appropriate consequences for breaking rules and consistently enforce them.
- ◉ **Manage your own pressure for success and fear of failure**: Respect their talents, interests, capacities and encourage the things that they are good at to give them an experience of success
- ◉ **College is not the end game but the beginning of adulthood**: College students change their majors on average 11 times - don't push them to decide these things prematurely. Be open, accepting, and flexible - they will find their way.



WHAT MATTERS - GETTING TO KNOW THEM



Teens want parents to know them:

The challenge is to get to know teens gracefully, without raising their defenses, and share with them some of the wisdom parents have learned since adolescence.

This lays the groundwork for a satisfying relationship

COMMUNICATING



⦿ 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 social contacts

WHAT WORKS

- **Create an atmosphere of open conversation:**
 - *Talk about a "neutral" issue.* Not every conversation has to be about feelings and relationships.
 - *Use time at the table.* Family dinners encourage conversations, but let everybody share the load. Think of a few questions for people to answer, and avoid judging the replies.
 - *Refine your questions.* Learn to ask gentle questions that require more than a yes-or-no answer.
- **Encourage conversation.** Encourage your child to talk about whatever interests him or her. Listen without interruption and give your child a chance to teach you something new. Your active listening to your child's enthusiasms paves the way for conversations about topics that concern you.



- ◉ **Ask open-ended questions.** Encourage your teen to tell you how he or she thinks and feels about the issue you're discussing. Avoid questions that have a simple "yes" or "no" answer.
- ◉ **Control your emotions.** If you hear something you don't like, try not to respond with anger. Instead, take a few deep breaths and acknowledge your feelings in a constructive way.
- ◉ **Make every conversation a "win-win" experience.** Don't lecture or try to "score points" on your teen by showing how he or she is wrong. If you show respect for your child's viewpoint, he or she will be more likely to listen to and respect yours.
- ◉ **Listen to actions.** How do you do that? You notice whether your teen is slamming doors or leaving incriminating notes around the house. Is something wrong at school?
- ◉ **Guide don't force.**



DON'T EXPECT WHAT THEY CAN'T DELIVER



- Teens have very few **time management skills** so don't expect them to have those skills.
 - Suggest, don't lecture on time management.
 - Teens will save face if they pick up a technique "on their own" that you suggested.
 - Don't demand
 - Parents must decide what is negotiable and nonnegotiable with their teen. Perhaps having a messy room is negotiable and doing homework are not.
- Model good time management

HAVE PATIENCE



- ◉ Teen cognitive processes will develop but it lags the development of hormones which promote risk taking. Therefore:
 - Adolescents have a much harder time stepping back from risky situations than adults.
 - They have a harder time understanding the consequences from their decisions.
 - They read emotions through a different part of the brain than adults. The John Hopkins study, reveals results of an MRI study. They were shown faces that expressed fear in order to identify with the emotion. About half of the teens got it wrong, mistaking the expression as that of shock, sadness, or confusion.

Solution = Be understanding and calm and keep repeating your message.

TIME FOR THE TOUGH TALK: WHERE



- ◉ **Pick a place that provides an "out e.g. traveling in the car, eating ice cream/meal, playing a game, walking in the park etc. "** Kids say it's easier to talk with their parents if there's something else to focus on when things get awkward.
- ◉ **Avoid distractions.** Turn off your cell/tv/computer
- ◉ **Choose a safe place.** Kids want a place where they feel at ease sharing the scary parts of their hearts. Where is that for your teen? If you don't know, ask.
- ◉ **If you find a place that works, stick with it.** Try taking your teen to breakfast or lunch once a week. Establish a habit like this and your kids may get comfortable enough to open up, even asking hard questions about life.

TIME FOR THE TOUGH TALK: HOW



- ◉ Begin a confrontation with a **soft voice and respect for your teen**, and it's likely that the confrontation will be more productive and less destructive.
- ◉ **Let your teen speak first.** Young people we surveyed said that if they have a chance to talk first, they're more receptive to what their parents say. Once teens get to speak their minds, they're usually willing to listen to the other side.
- ◉ **Don't interrupt.** It's tempting to dive in and react to a piece of what your teen just said.
- ◉ **Give consideration** to your teen's perspective
- ◉ **Reflect back** what you have heard and make sure that you understand

YOUR TURN

- ◉ **Watch your tone of voice and body language:** Model what you want your teen to do. When parents yell or use sarcasm or point fingers, kids figure it's okay for them to do the same
- ◉ **Explain what you want and why.** Have your teen restate what you've told him/her. Explain the reasons for your request or rule.
- ◉ **Fight fair.** No name-calling. Stick to the issue at hand. Don't dredge up past failures. Avoid the words "always" and "never."
- ◉ **Don't compare your teen with anyone** – living or dead, related or unrelated
- ◉ **Take a break when necessary.** If you or your teen are getting too wound up, take a time out until people calm down.
- ◉ **When talking fails, write a letter or email.** Writing gives you time to sort through your thoughts and express yourself carefully. It gives your teen time to respond instead of reacting defensively.



LET THEM SLEEP



- Teens need 9 to 10 hours a night. There is a shift in circadian rhythms during adolescence: *It makes sense to teen bodies to get up later and stay up later.*
- Sleep is thought to aid the critical reorganization of the teen brain.
- But due to school and other schedules, many teens rack up sleep debt and become increasingly cognitively impaired over the course of the week.
- Sleep-deprivation further exacerbates moodiness and cloudy decision-making.

SEEK SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF



- ◉ Connecting with other parents can:
 - Provide support and give you a place to vent your feelings so they do not get acted upon
 - Help with strategies and ideas of things to try
 - Provide an opportunity to get consultation re things you would like to try
 - Provide information regarding things you do not know
- ◉ Develop or join a peer support group
- ◉ Seek the help of therapist if there are problems that persist over time , especially if your teen becomes depressed, anxious, starts using substances, who is behaviorally out of control. *Early intervention is essential for successful outcomes!*

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Thank you

