

Your teen's brain is 'under construction'

Parents who have teenagers are often puzzled by some of the changes they see in their kids during adolescence, and have traditionally blamed these changes on hormones. Research within the last ten years has focused on the adolescent brain and how it matures by using MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) to track the development and activity level.

Scientists at the National Institute of Mental Health in the U.S. have found the adolescent brain is a "work in progress" and undergoes substantial changes in the teen years and continuing into the early twenties.

The parts of the brain that handle self-control, judgment, emotions and organization have the greatest changes between adolescence and adulthood than at any other time in life.

During this brain growth period, they may not have access to certain parts of their brain they did before, as that part is currently "under construction."

During this growth period, there is a process called "pruning" where neurons that are not used disappear and those that are used stay ... the "use it or lose it" concept. Spending time with your teen in active, positive ways and encouraging them in a variety of interests helps to permanently "hard wire" their brain in a good way.

Letting your youth watch television or play video games continually will not provide the stimulation needed to develop the ability to think logically, understand emotions, and learn how to control their own impulses. Teens use their "emotional brain" more than their "rational brain" during this period of brain construction.

This results in their own heightened emotional re-activity to situations and also a limited



DPSN

ASK A PARENT

capacity to read facial expressions in others and difficulty in understanding others' emotions.

Their brain changes also contribute to; increased risk-taking, increased interest in low-effort, high-excitement activities (like amusement rides), decreased levels of good judgment and understanding consequences, and increased interest in unusual or novel events and activities.

Like you did when they were a toddler, you may need to repeat yourself many times during many days before your teen is able to actually process your message and integrate it into their brain.

This will require patience on your part, but if you stick with clear and consistent messages, your teen will eventually "get it".

The good news is that by the

end of the teen years and into the early twenties, the adolescent brain finishes its construction period in the frontal lobe. This is the section that impacts judgment, planning, problem solving, impulse inhibition, self-awareness and abstract thought.

When you are frustrated by your teen and wondering how you can make it work, remember with time things will improve on their own as brain development progresses.

Some things to remember as a parent of a teen:

- Despite their protests at times, they do need time with you, so keep open the line of communication. Make sure to spend some of this time with them one to one.
- Adolescents have difficulty reading emotions, so be genuine.
- When communicating with your teen, talking with them works much better than talking at them. Use dialogue, not interview questions.
- Help them maintain feeling connected to family and school.
- Encourage positive interaction.
- Remember to make positive

statements to your teen about them and what they are doing as much as you can.

Some resources are: Teen Brain, Teen Mind, What Parents Need to Know to Survive the Adolescent Years by Dr. Ron

Clavier, and Why Do They Act That Way by David Walsh.

Ask a Parent is a monthly column on parenting issues provided by the Dufferin Parent Support Network.

NEW! LENDING FOR SUCCESS

Loans for Business

Up To **\$250,000**

Access the Capital you need to start or expand your business

Business support and mentorship available



Centre For Business and Economic Development* Canada

A Community Futures Development Corporation

705-445-8410

1-877-876-7908

www.centreforbusiness.ca



Chris Halliday - The Banner

SAFETY FIRST: Debbie Goss receives a first-hand lesson in safety from Vince Cicero, car seat technician for St. John's Ambulance, at a clinic held at Hyundai Orangeville. Goss visited the clinic to have a car seat fitted for her one-year-old grandson Brayden on Saturday.

SEARCH FOR A VEHICLE
Select your car-buying criteria below.

All Regions Change Region
POSTAL CODE: [] WITHIN: [All] GO

CHOOSE ONE OR MORE VEHICLE TYPE(S)

All Passenger Sport Hybrid SUV/Crossover Minivan Pickup Commercial

All Used Dealer Only Private Only

CHOOSE UP TO THREE MAKES AND MODELS

Make: Honda (546) Model: Accord (137)

All Makes

CHOOSE YEAR AND PRICE RANGE

Year: 2006 (76) To: 2009 (10) Price Range: Select Price TO Select Price

SEARCH

2009 Honda Accord \$28,813

Year	Make	Model	Price
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813
2008	Honda	Accord	\$28,813

Simple. Quick. Effective.

- Search tens of thousands of new and used vehicles.
- Refine your search by proximity, makes, models, price and more.
- Access multiple photos for a complete 360° view of each vehicle.
- Rely on detailed and accurate vehicle descriptions.
- Compare multiple makes and models of vehicles at the same time.
- Read expert vehicle reviews and news to support your buying decisions



Wheels.ca is the best place to find your next vehicle.

Wheels.ca
Find Your Car. Fast.