Adolescent Brains: How to meet the challenges of teaching them and keeping them safe

For Key Stages 3+ At All Levels of Support

Why is it essential to think about adolescent brains?
Every child passes through a complex process of maturation and development before reaching adulthood, whereby the brain undergoes a rapid period of growth and reorganisation. Changes in hormones and brain chemistry add to the mix! This can be a time of great opportunity and adaptability as well as risk and vulnerability. The teenage brain actually functions differently to the adult brain or that of a younger child. Adolescent brains need adults surrounding them who try to understand and empathise with them in order to develop emotional regulation. Understanding what is happening in the brain can also help us to teach them more effectively and help to keep them safe. It is essential that we think about why adolescents engage in risk taking behaviour, seek thrills and need frequent reinforcement, as well as why many skills such as inhibiting impulses or reading emotions in others are not fully developed.

How can schools help?
Adolescent brains need adults around them who:
- Understand the changes that are occurring in the brain and body and how these impact on behaviour
- Can listen and empathise with young adults to help regulate their complex and extreme emotions
- Can make the most of the unique learning opportunities that coincide with adolescence
- Can manage the difficulties that can occur when adolescents are most vulnerable and keep them safe

How do we know that training for school staff around adolescent brain development is helpful?
- 100% of respondents agreed that the training would impact on pupil outcomes
- 100% of respondents agreed that the session was useful and informative
- 100% felt that they could take the information learned on the course and implement it in school

What do staff who have been to these sessions have to say?

Behaviour, progress and relationships will improve as a result of implementing what I’ve learned
Improved self-awareness
Better relationships between pupils and teachers
It will help with managing behaviour and understanding how the mind works

Where can I access training?
To access centralised training for this course, including at the TaMHS Conference if appropriate, please visit: [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/tamhs](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/tamhs).
Training at your school, or within clusters, for your staff can be commissioned from the Educational Psychology Service by contacting the TaMHS Administrator: [tamhs@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:tamhs@northamptonshire.gov.uk) or by speaking to your Link Educational Psychologist.