

Worlds Apart  
What Works with  
Adolescence and  
Why

**Presented By**  
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Adapted in part from Jeffrey M. Georgi, M.Div., CCAS,  
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Hall

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Who am I and Why am I here?

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At the completion of this brief workshop,  
participants will:

- Gain an understanding of the developmental tasks of adolescence.
- Grasp the vulnerabilities particular to adolescent development related to substance use.
- Develop a deeper understanding of the role of traditional and social media on adolescent culture.
- Gain exposure to and a conceptual understanding of the role of experiential exercises for adolescents.

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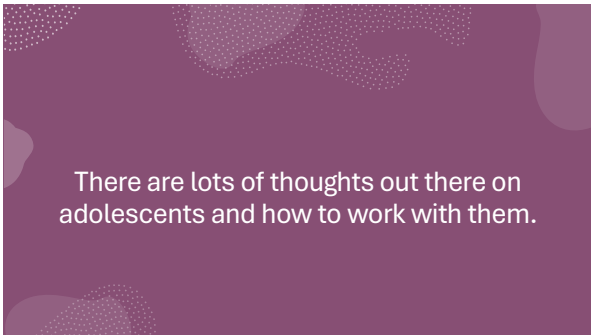
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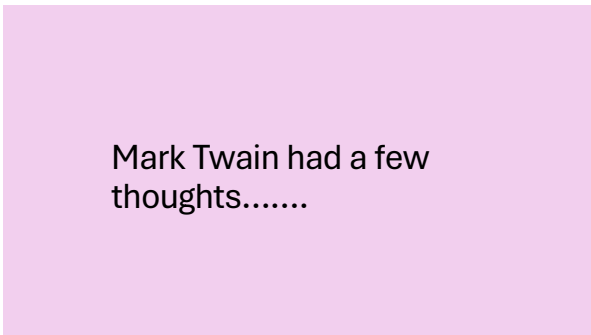
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### What is adolescence?

According to Encarta World English Dictionary adolescence is:

**“time preceding adulthood:**  
the period from puberty to adulthood in human beings”



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### World Gap 1

#### • Adolescents are not adults.

- Adolescents have a hard time remembering that fact.
  - So do their families.
  - So do we.

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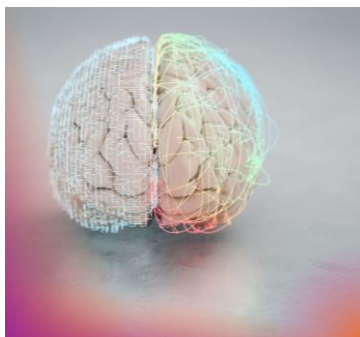
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### The Adolescent Brain

- Driven to learn
- Complicated beyond imagination

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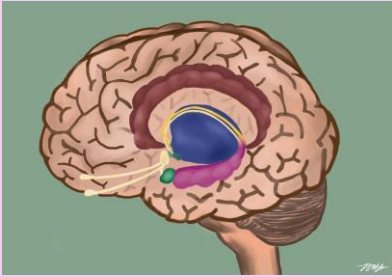
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Adolescents do not think like adults.

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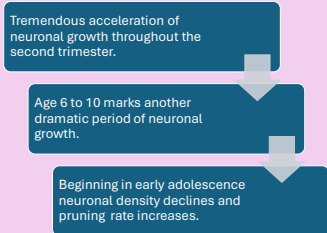
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### Brain development



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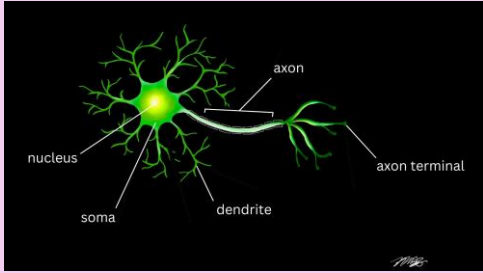
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### World Gap 2

- Adolescents are literally losing their minds...and developing it!
- As dendrites are pruned in adolescence the brain becomes more efficient at what it does repetitively.

BUT

It is losing some of its "liquid" thinking.

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### Question:

What are the pros and cons of this "pruning" process?

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### Adolescence, not Puberty

- Puberty – secondary sex characteristics develop and potential for reproduction is attained.
- Reached earlier than previous generations
- Not to be confused with adolescence
- Adolescence lasting longer
- We have a development gap

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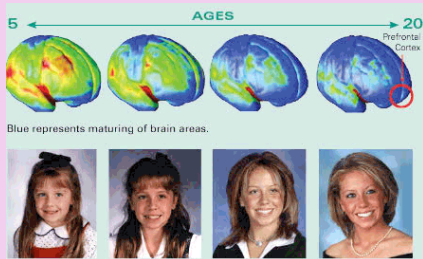
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- Biology parallels the psychological and social requirements of adolescents. (Goleman)



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### The Adolescent Brain

- The adolescent brain is different from the adult brain.
- It is geared to learn.
- Nucleus Accumbens (NA) - the brain's novelty alarm bell and part of the brain's reward pathway.
- During first decade of life, energy is focused on growth in this area particularly the increase of dopamine receptors.

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### The Adolescent Brain

- As kids move into adolescence, the “energy” in the NA drops - decrease in dopamine receptor sensitivity levels (White,2003).

-How hard is to make a child laugh?

- Adolescents often look bored and depressed.

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### The Adolescent Brain

- Kids need more external stimulation to activate the NA which leads to risk taking.
- We need our kids out of the nest and exploring their world.
- The adolescent brain is hard wired to seek more stimulation and novelty.

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Adolescents do not think like adults.

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### World Gap 3

- Adolescents are not young adults; they are big kids.

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### The Adolescent Brain

- Adolescents have a biological mandate to explore their world.
- During adolescence growth in the central core of the brain is solidifying (learning/emotion).
- There is increased activity in the prefrontal cortex (the judgment/planning center).
- The connections between the learning/emotional center of the brain and its judgment center are strengthening.

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### Generational Quiz:

Please answer the following question in the chat.

- What was a defining fashion or style during your adolescent years?

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Without Novelty...

Boredom is deadly!

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### Adolescent Brain Development

- If we do not take advantage of the brain's ability to learn during adolescence the window narrows due to myelination.
- Intellectual stimulation and relational connection are central to adolescent maturation.
- Emotional safety and relational connection increase learning capacity. Why?

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### The Adolescent Brain

- Experiences that challenge the adolescent emotionally, physically, and intellectually take advantage of this novelty need.
- Combined with purposeful awareness activities, **experiential techniques** increase prefrontal maturation.
- **Energy** in explicit and implicit memory can be channeled to override previous and unproductive behavioral patterns.

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### World Gap 4

Drugs do not help the process.

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### Add nicotine to the mix

- One dosing episode increased genetic activity (Schickel et al., 2005) that increases dendrite formation and **synaptogenesis** in adults and adolescents. (University of Wisconsin, 2005)
- Adolescent brain response was twice that of the adult brain, particularly in the PFC (Schickel, 2005)
- Adolescent brain “learns” the re-enforcement with greater energy. (memories are more powerful)
- Physiologically, nicotine is the gateway drug and seems to prime the brain for addictions to other substances independent of genetic heritage.

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### The Adolescent Brain

what gets in the way of learning

Alcohol negatively impacts the hippocampus (Swartzwelder, DUMC).

Alcohol negatively impacts the prefrontal cortex particularly during binge use (Crews, UNC).

Alcohol blocks long-term potentiation and leads to blackouts (White, DUMC).

Alcohol interferes with memory migration.

This impact may be life long (Wilson, et.al., DUMC).

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### The Adolescent Brain

what gets in the way of learning

- It's not just the alcohol that is the problem.
- After four or more drinks (1 beer 12 oz, one glass of wine, or 1.5 oz of liquor) the adolescent brain experiences significant stress through withdrawal. (Pendergast U.of K.)
- Younger brain tissue is up to five times more sensitive to over excitability during withdrawal. (Pendergast U.of K.)

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### The Adolescent Brain What gets in the way of learning

- IQ can be significantly impacted by a pattern of binge use, (S. Brown, U. Cal. at San Diego).
- Just two years of binge use can lower IQ as much as 10%, (S. Brown, U. Cal. at San Diego).
- It is the binge use pattern of alcohol that is exactly what has been documented as normative with in the adolescent population, (Weslcher, Harvard).




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The brain images below show how alcohol may harm teen mental function. Compared with a young non-drinker, a 15-year-old with an alcohol problem showed poor brain activity during a memory task. This finding is noted by the lack of pink and red coloring.

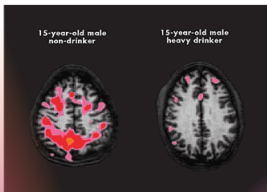


Image from Susan Tapert, PhD, University of California, San Diego.

### The Adolescent Brain What gets in the way of learning

(A. White)

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### Addiction

- Over diagnosed in adolescents (who come to treatment)
- A devastating and misunderstood disease
- Treatable but not curable
- Multi-systemic
- Long term treatment
- Address co-mingling disorders
- Recovering family and community




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### The Adolescent Brain

- Environments are ideally safe and free from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.
  - **The power of family systems cannot be overlooked.**
- If an adolescent resides with or returns to a family system that has not changed there is a powerful "gravitational" pull toward regression and relapse.
- Successful interventions require significant time to solidify lasting change.

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### World Gap 5

Adolescents need support to be healthy.

More often than not, the adolescent you meet is a symptom of the problem and not the problem itself.

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**Considering Families:**

Don't assume the family is a help  
Defining family  
When family work is contraindicated  
Engaging families:  
On paper  
Materials  
Referrals  
In Treatment  
Family/Multifamily Services

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**What is the  
primary  
function of  
adolescence?**

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Consider this...

Coolness is subjective.

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This is a generation gap.

(Is this a new concept?)

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**“The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers.”**

~Socrates 470-399 B.C

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### How Can We Support the Adolescent Brain and Development?

- Develop longer more general life skills: stress management and mindfulness, getting social support and asking for help, increasing physical activity, building study skills, nutrition, team work and a sense of belonging.
- Altruism
- Use influential role models (family is the most important).
- Capitalize on relational and emotional impact on memory.
- Help adolescents make positive memories.
- Use the power of families.

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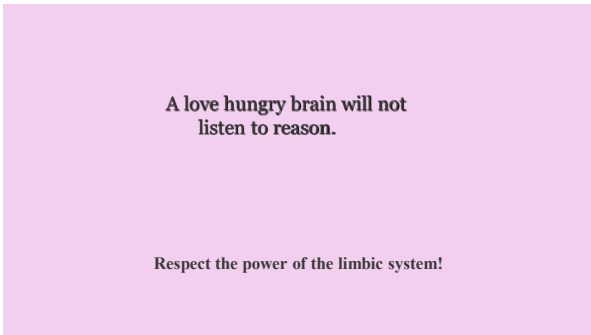
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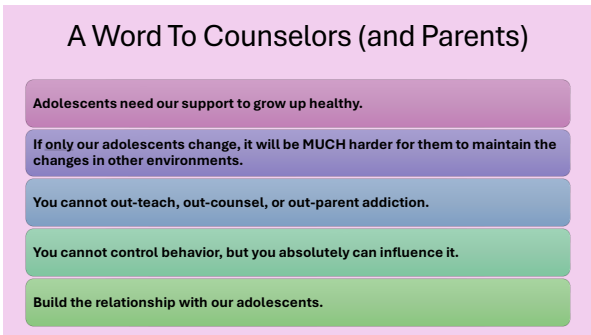
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### World Gap 6

Adolescent treatment should not look like adult treatment.

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### Differences in Working with Adolescence

1. Effective adolescent treatment should be done by someone who actually likes adolescents and can engage with them.
2. Effective adolescent treatment must take advantage of "novelty needs".
3. Effective adolescent treatment should take learning styles into account (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic).
4. Effective adolescent treatment must take developmental tasks into consideration.
5. Effective adolescent treatment must include and impact systems in which the adolescent is engaged.

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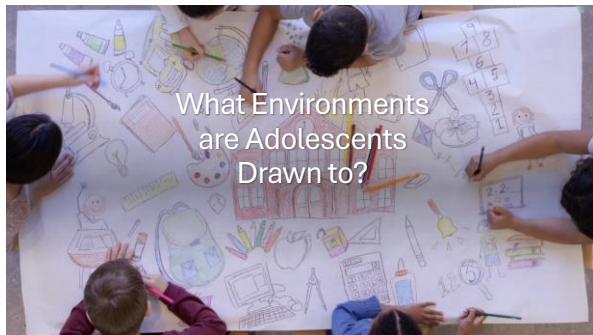
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What Environments are Adolescents Drawn to?



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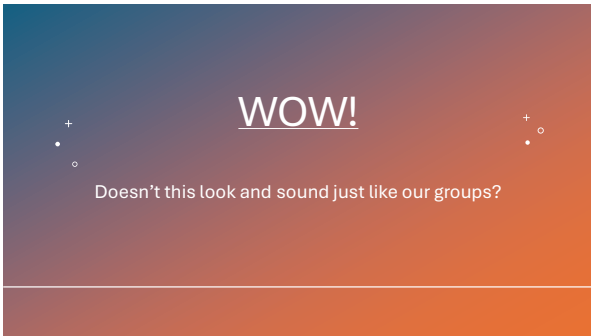
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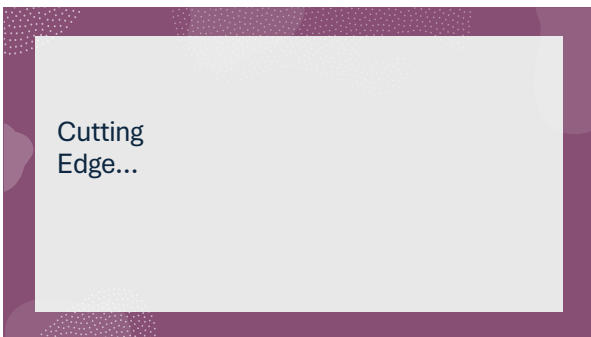
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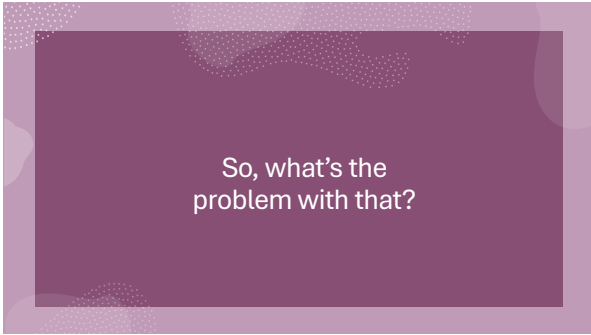
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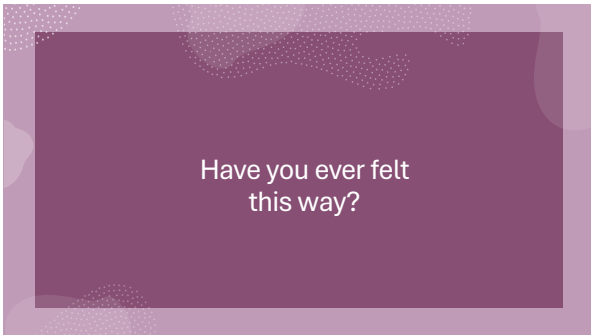
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Why do we refuse to apply what we all know?



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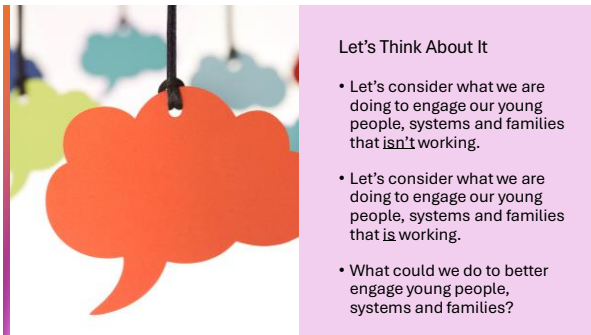
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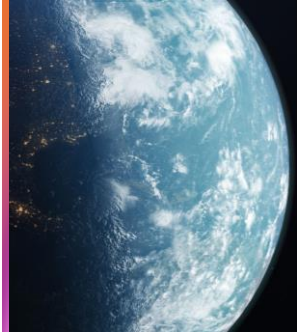
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Are we engaging our young people where they are?

How in touch are we with their world?

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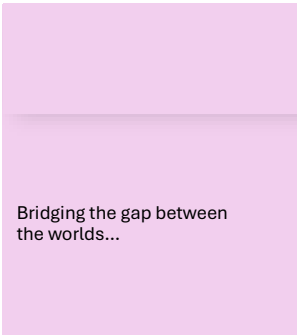
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Bridging the gap between the worlds...



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**Things to Consider:**

How can we increase novelty in our groups and sessions?

How can we encourage adolescents to teach us their culture?

How can we use technology to support young people in their growth and recovery?

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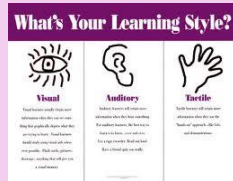
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### Learning Styles

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinesthetic




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**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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 James Campbell

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With Gratitude To...

- Belleview University
- Petra Clay-Jones
- Jeff Georgi
- Dr. Susan Holman
- Bob Lynn
- Elizabeth Serricchio

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