



BRAIN DEVELOPMENT + DECISION MAKING 201

Description Of This Class For Parents + Caregivers

Teens get a lot of flak for their poor decision making, but it's not all deserved. This class explores the ins and outs of brain maturation and its impact on decision making.

Right now, your teen's decision making is heavily influenced by their limbic system: the brain's emotional and reward-seeking center. It's fully up and running by middle school, which means emotions, peers, and instant gratification are in the driver's seat. Meanwhile, the prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain responsible for long-term thinking and planning—is still under construction. In fact, the brain doesn't fully mature until almost 30 years old. So for high schoolers, it's like having a supercharged sports car... with a GPS that keeps buffering.

Teens' still-developing brains impact how they manage emotions, assess (or fail to assess) risk, and make decisions. But it's not all bad! The brain is actively undergoing two processes—myelination and pruning—that strengthen connections it uses often and nixes the ones it doesn't. This means that now is the perfect time to try new skills and solidify healthy habits.

By teaching students about how their brain works, we give them language to understand their choices instead of just feeling embarrassed by them. This lesson empowers kids with tools to hack their limbic systems and give their brains enough time to make thoughtful choices. Yes, the adolescent brain is a work in progress, but with the right tools and support, they can steer in the right direction—even if it's not always in a straight line!