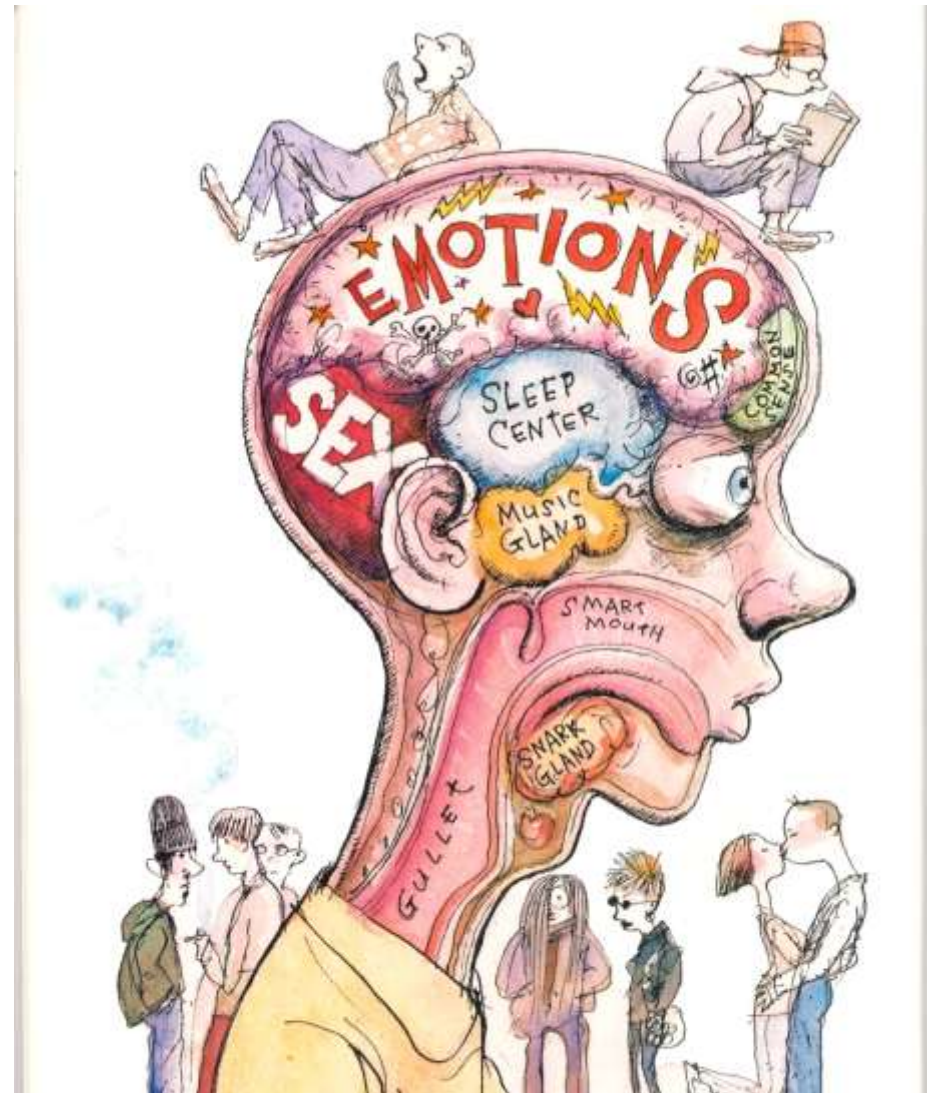


Polishing Our Prevention Work: Understanding the Teenage Brain

Ken Winters, Ph.D.
Mentor Foundation & University
of Minnesota
winte001@umn.edu

Mentor-UYDEL Project
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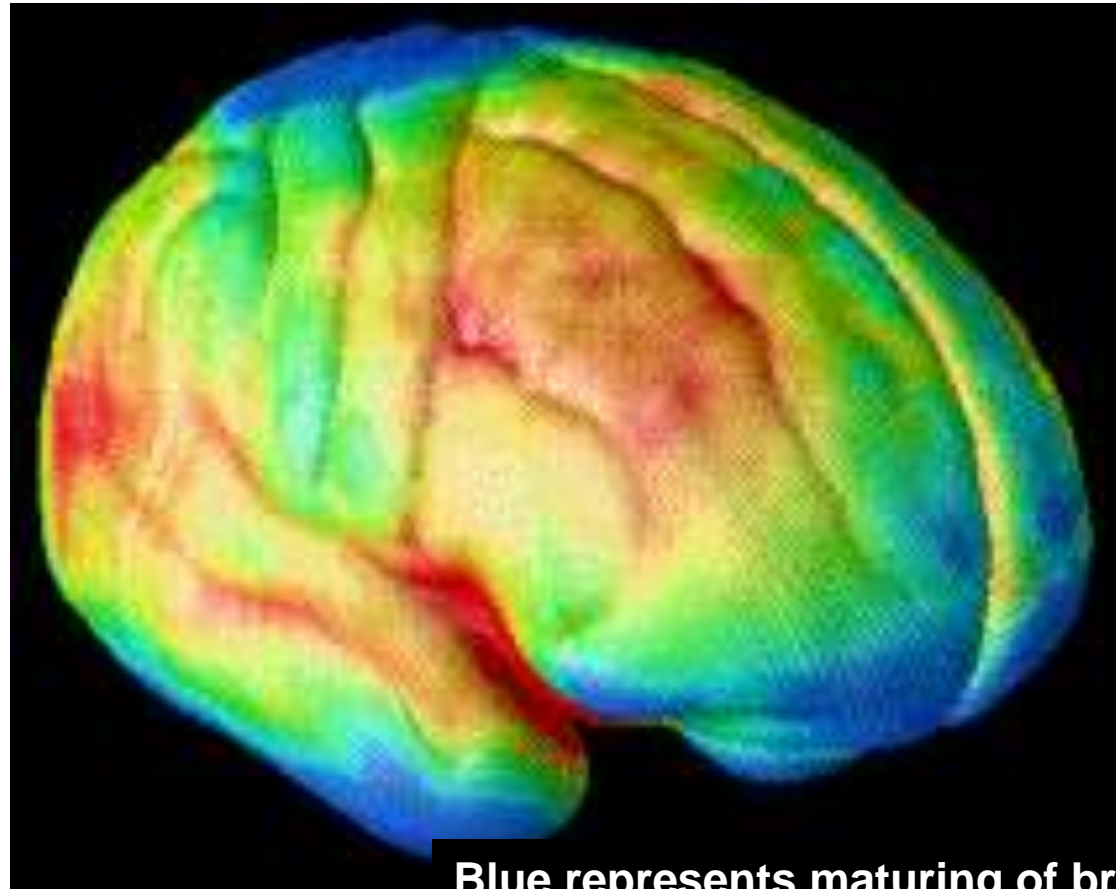
Maturation Occurs from Back to Front of the Brain

Images of Brain Development in Healthy Youth

(Ages 5 – 20)

Earlier:
Motor Coordination
Emotion
Motivation

Later:
Judgment



Blue represents maturing of brain areas

Implications of Brain Development for Adolescent Behavior

**reward incentives >
perception of consequences**



Brain Development May Reveal These Tendencies (Dahl, 2004)

- **Preference for**
 1. **physical activity**
 2. **high excitement and rewarding activities**
 3. **activities with peers that trigger high intensity/arousal**
 4. **novelty**
- **Less than optimal..**
 5. **control of emotional arousal**
 6. **consideration of negative conseq.**
- **Greater tendency to...**
 7. **be attentive to social information**
 8. **take risks and show impulsiveness**



Implications for Maximizing Effective Prevention

- **Risk taking is normal**
 - **Shape it toward healthy, pro-social activities**
- **Risk taking is influenced by emotional and contextual, not cognitive, factors**
 - **Teach good decision making when faced with typical emotional and contextual situations**
- **Teach rules is not sufficient; youth have a good understanding of harm and risk**
- **Use peers and parents as change agents**

Peer To Peer User Guide

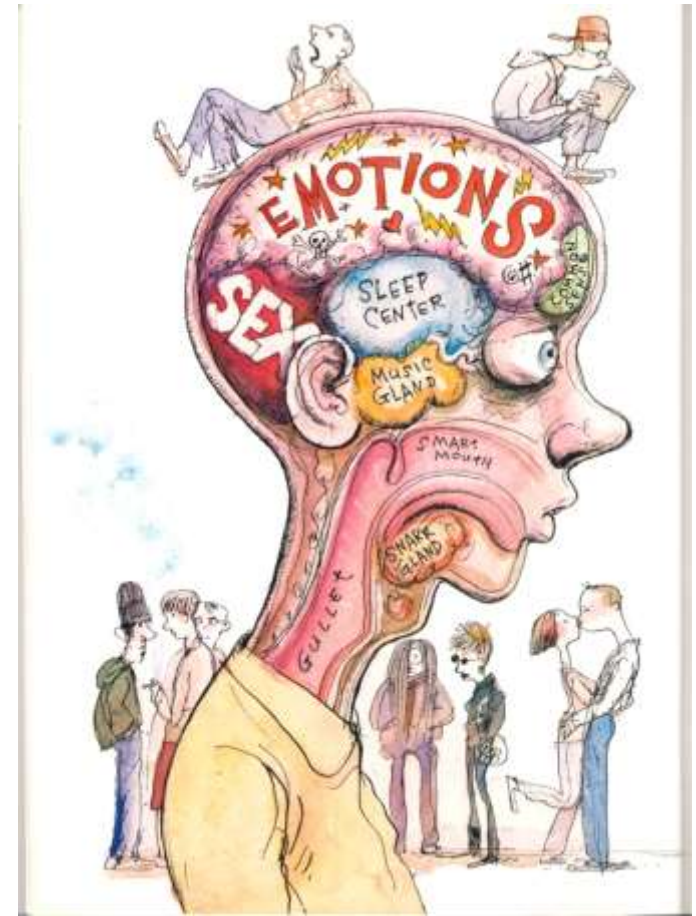


Partners.
Prevention



Importance of Peers

- **Several reasons to focus on peers as an agent of change**
 - **Peer influences may be stronger than parental influences**
 - **One of the strongest risk factors for drug use and delinquency: peer drug use and delinquency**
 - **Peer-led prevention programs tend to be more effective than programs that do not involve peers as change agents**



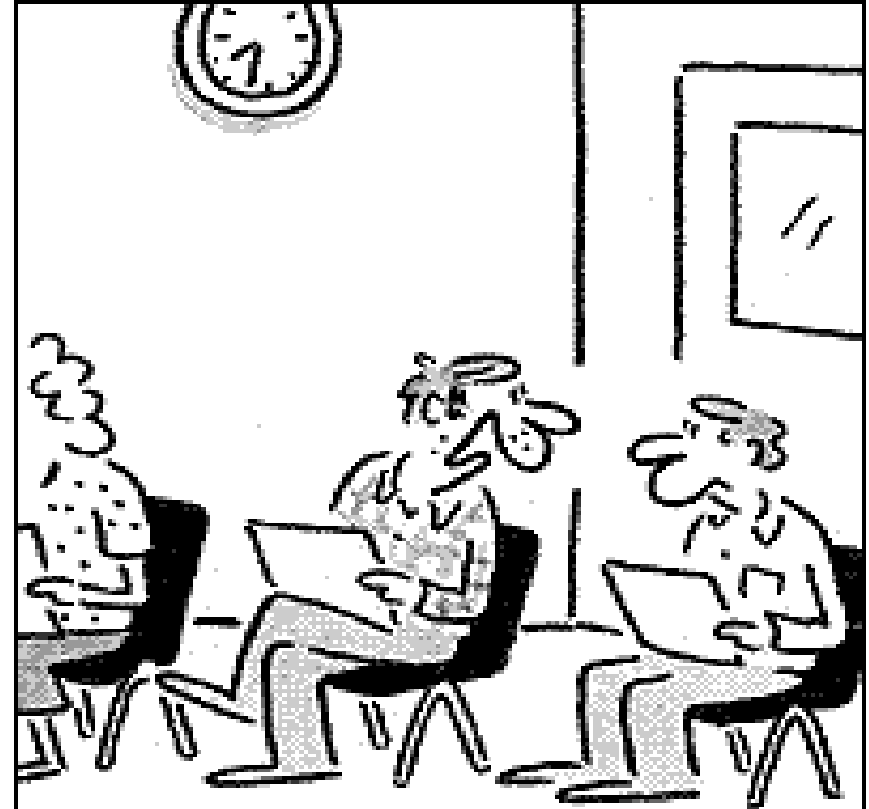


Prevention Smart Parents

[www. prevention-smart.org](http://www.prevention-smart.org)

Importance of Parents

- Parents still have a major role in the health and well-being of a young person.
- Parent role moves from being the **pilot**, to being more like the **air traffic controller**



'I attend as many parenting classes as I can - anything to get away from my children'

Parents are Important

P = Promote activities that capitalize on the strengths of the developing brain.

A = Assist children with challenges that require planning.

R = Reinforce their seeking advice from adults; teach decision making.

E = Encourage lifestyle that promotes good brain development.

N = Never underestimate the impact of a parent being a good role model.

T = Tolerate the “oops” behaviors due to an immature brain.



THANK YOU!

winte001@umn.edu

Importance of Teaching Skills for the Developing Adolescent Brain

impulse control

“second” thought processes

social decision making

dealing with risk situations

taking healthy risks