

4. Parenting teenagers – What’s going on for teenagers?

Hello again everybody.

We’ve already talked about support, the four constructs, and what’s going on for adults.

Now we are going to talk about what’s going on for teenagers.

The typical teenager stereotype is not very good and is quite negative and the social media has a lot to answer for.

We know from working with teenagers and as parents that teenagers can be phenomenally kind, creative, and intelligent and have a real positive energy about them.

But I think people lose sight of that.

What we pay attention to is what we get more of. We try to pay attention to the good stuff about teenagers and not the negative stuff.

So, what is going on with teenagers?

It’s a big developmental process going on for adolescents and teenagers. They are trainee adults.

There are three things I want to talk about. I want to talk about

- puberty and hormones
- sleep
- the brain (because that’s what’s making it such a massive developmental process for teenagers)

Puberty evokes lots of physical and emotional changes for teenagers and it releases lots of hormones.

The two main hormones are testosterone and oestrogen. These are the sex hormones and ‘oh my gosh!’ we don’t want to talk about sex in front of our children and children don’t want to talk about sex in front of their parents.

They don’t want to see their parents as sexual beings and parents don’t want to see their teenagers as sexual beings.

But testosterone and oestrogen are floating around big time and your teenagers are thinking of sex, so as parents we need to talk about sex, but not just about sex.

It’s about talking about sex and relationships and keeping safe. So that’s one thing that’s going on for teenagers.

The other hormone is melatonin which is linked to sleep. For adults the melatonin is released about 9pm or 10pm; so we are ready for our bed at 10:30.

But for teenagers it's much later. The research shows that it's probably 1am; so that's why teenagers are probably more like night owls than adults.

And that's why they may want to stay up later and probably stay up all night.

But society does not allow them to do that.

As parents, we need to get them into a good sleep routine and to try to support them and guide them with that.

Be mindful they're not just doing it to be difficult. Remember the melatonin hormone - when they say they are not tired they are probably not tired at 9pm at night. So be mindful of that.

But they do still need a good night's sleep: 7 – 8 hours' sleep and to have a good sleep routine. Get rid of phones and anything with a blue light an hour before sleep and just have that as a habit.

So we've talked about the sex hormones, puberty, and sleep.

Last but by no means least - the brain. There's so much going on in the brain. There's a lot of pruning going on. We thought initially that the main brain development went on in the first three years of life, but in actual fact an awful lot of brain development is going on for teenagers, for those years between 9 and 24.

There's one part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, the logical and problem solving part. The part that develops being sensible.

Then you have the amygdala which is the part of the brain that causes arousal and emotion and having fun.

So the two areas for an adult are at the same level. But for teenagers they don't develop the same way.

That's why they sometimes take a lot of risk and don't have the logic to think about problem solving.

They say, "Why do I need to tidy my room? I can leave a cup there, a slice of toast to grow penicillin for a month".

They don't have that logical thinking.

What I'm trying to get at is that there is a lot going on for teenagers.

As I've said before, as a parent you need to tune into their feelings as opposed to their behaviour.

Parents matter. We need to guide and support them during this developmental process while they are trainee adults.

In the next clip I am going to talk about some more ways of responding.

So thank you very much for listening to me talking about the trainee adults.