

Teenagers and COVID-19: a survival guide



The Student Wellbeing Department



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Who are we?



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Who are we?

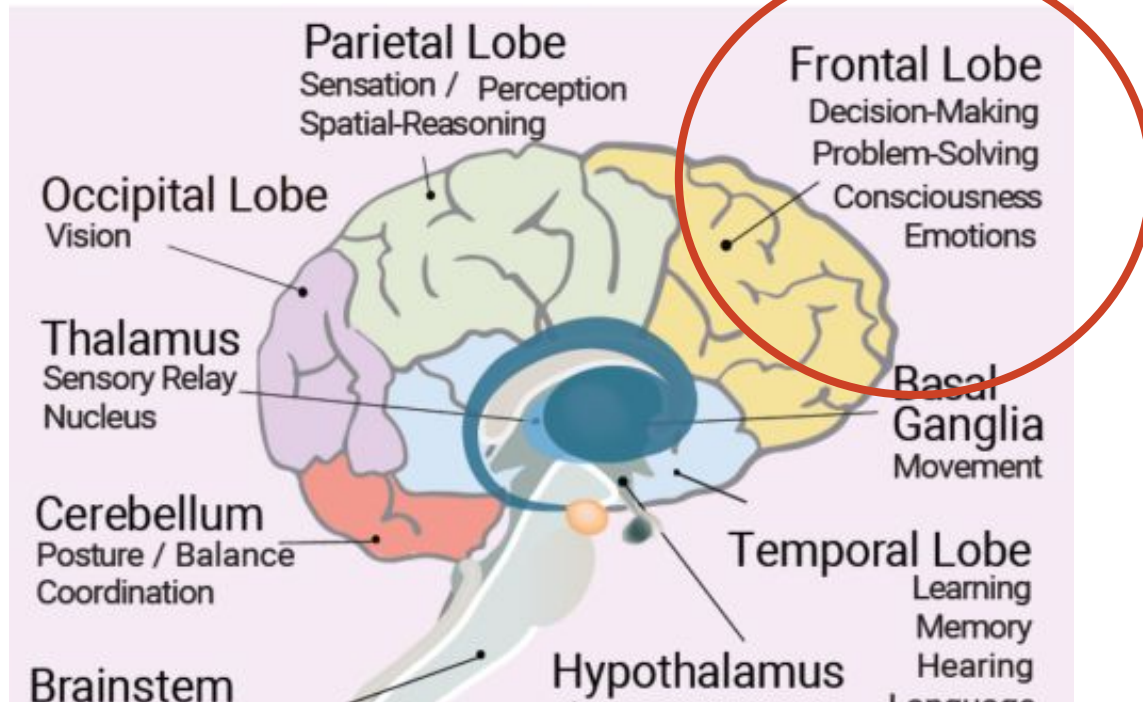


Krystle Verkerk

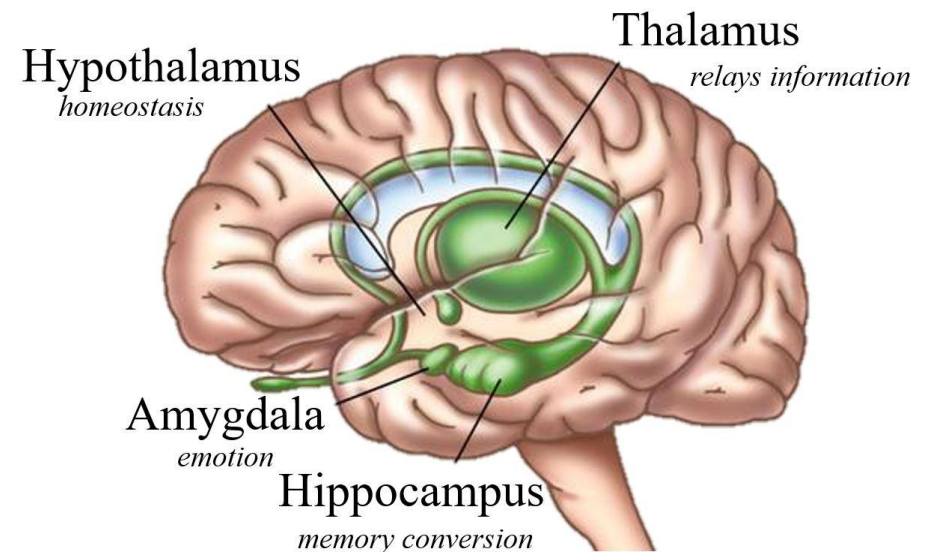
School social worker

The biology of the teenage brain

- The last part to mature is the **prefrontal cortex** → higher cognitive functions such as **behavioral control, planning, and assessing the risk** of decisions
- In emotional situations, the more mature **limbic and reward systems** gain the upper hand → **emotions, stimulation/ arousal, memory**



The Limbic System



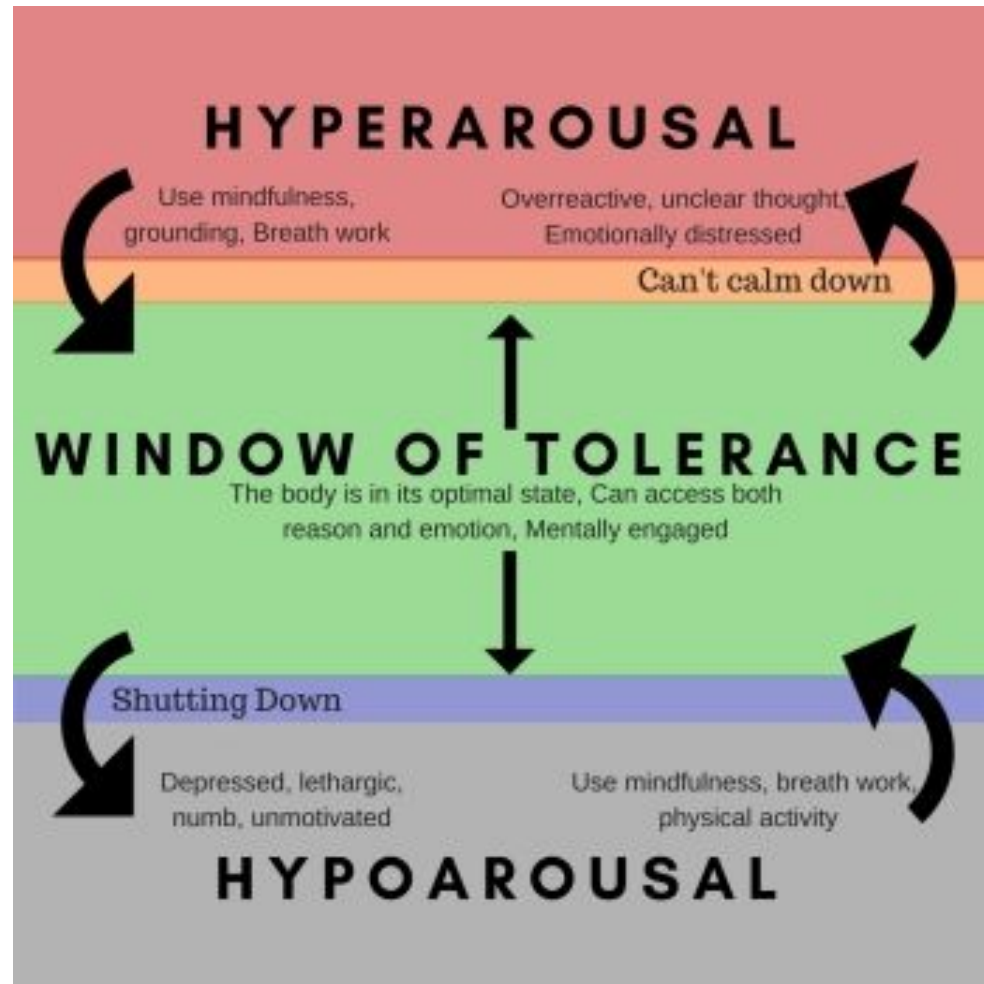
The connection with adolescent behavior

- Greater chance to take **risks**
 - * The teenage brain gives out greater rewards (e.g dopamine - the feel good neurotransmitter) for taking risk. This is useful for learning.
 - * Health and unhealthy risks. How do we provide opportunities for healthy risk?
- Procrastination - It is harder for adolescence to plan ahead.
- High social anxiety.
- Decision making - Can be driven by the emotional centre rather than the prefrontal cortex (planning and behavioural control)

Worry and uncertainty



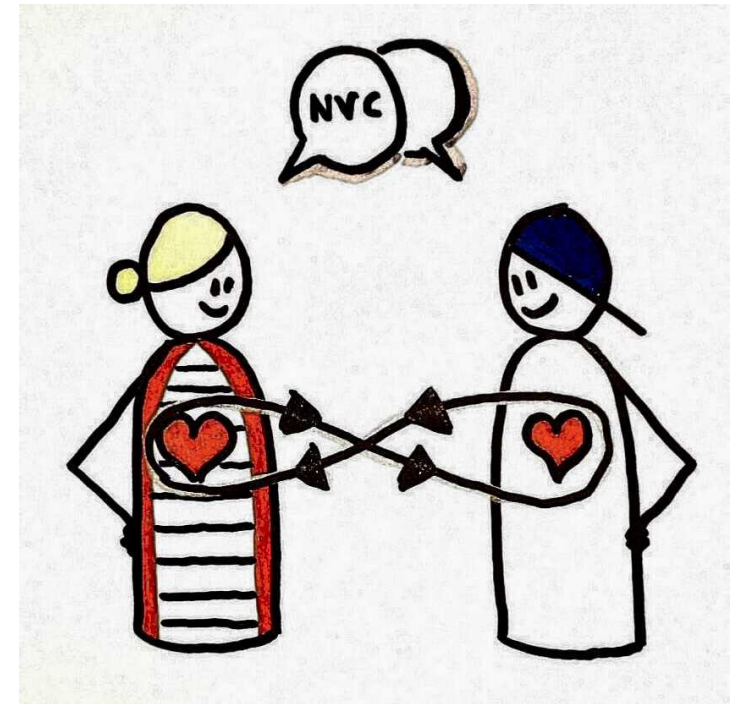
Window of tolerance



Non-violent Communication

4 basic steps of NVC process:

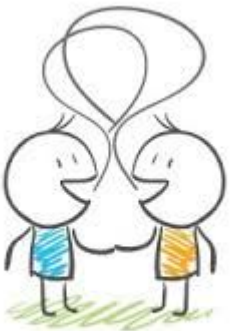
1. Objectively **OBSERVING** the situation (without evaluation, blame or moralistic judgment).
2. **IDENTIFYING** the feelings that the situation brings up,
3. **DIGGING** deeper to identify what need is or is not being met and
4. **REQUEST** actions that would better meet your needs.



Communicating well with your teenager I

Teenagers have different priorities, tips for a meaningful discussion:

- **Gather information about what is happening regarding the issue**
 - Show an interest in what matters to them, what worries them and why.
 - Validate their feelings. Listen and acknowledge what they tell you, without judging it.
 - Stay away from hurtful words such as “lazy” or other criticism,
 - Their procrastination might be hidden self-care or anxiety in regards to workload.
- **Brainstorm solutions with your teen**
 - humor and some exaggerations can help keep the conversation light and fun.
 - Choose one that you both can agree to. This might take some negotiation.
 - Agree on a date and time deadline.
 - Decide in advance together on clear and fair rules and boundaries.
- **Understand teens well enough to know that the deadline probably won't be met**
 - Stay calm: take a deep breath, count to ten, or pause the conversation entirely if you and/or your teenager need a break to calm down before you can talk more.
 - If they're angry and hurling insults or criticism at you, don't join in (however tempting it is!)



Communicating well with your teenager II

- **Show you trust them**
 - Give them responsibility for something or offer a privilege.
- **Limits**
 - Set boundaries and rules, but don't dictate or show double standards. Explain why the rules are important. Stick to them yourself. Write rules/instructions down.
- **Give praise**
 - Look for opportunities to give praise them, give positive feedback and say thank you.
- **Spend time together**
 - Investing time in your teenager strengthens your relationship. They might open up more when you're walking the dog or cooking, than if you sit down for 'serious chat'.
- **Be observant**
 - Pay attention to what's going on for your teenager and notice any changes so you can respond to them.



Communicating well with your teenager III

- Focus
 - Teenage brains can't multitask, so focus on "one thing at a time" to avoid overloading them with information or instructions.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat!
 - Teenage brain can't process "negative information" as well as adult brains can, so they can't learn from mistakes as effectively, or remember things that they don't want to hear.
 - Teenage brains can't remember to do tasks at a point that is later than now (prospective memory), so they need you to remind them to do things.
 - Reduce your reminders to one word (EG dishes) rather than more descriptive sentences which can feel critical (EG you've forgotten to do the dishes *again*, you can't watch any TV until they're done).



HOW TO RAISE YOUR MOTIVATION!



The belief that your work leads to a certain outcome.



Your inner drive. Why you are doing this.



$$\text{Motivation} = \frac{\text{Expectancy} \times \text{Value}}{\text{Impulsiveness} \times \text{Delay}}$$



How easily you are distracted by something.



How far you postpone your work.



SLEEP HYGIENE



PUT YOUR MOBILE AWAY AND
SET AN ALARM CLOCK



YOU NEED ABSOLUTE DARKNESS
AND QUIETNESS



READ A BOOK INSTEAD OF
WATCHING A TV SHOW



ESTABLISH A PRE-BEDTIME
RITUAL FOR YOURSELF



KEEP THE TEMPERATURE
COMFORTABLY COOL



USE A HUMIDIFIER
TO MOISTURIZE THE AIR

Other parents at ISH found this helpful:



Contacts & resources



Concerned about your teenager? Contact:

- At ISH: the student wellbeing department studentwellbeing@ishthehague.nl
- Outside ISH: for all your questions and queries about raising a teenager, contact Ms Krystle Verkerk from Schoolformaat: k.verkerk@schoolformaat.nl

The importance of self-care

- Just need a listening ear? “de Luisterlijn” 0900-0767 - deluisterlijn.nl



Books for further reading

- “Non violent communication, a language of life”, by Marshal Rosenberg
- “How to talk so teens will listen, and listen so teens will talk”, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- “The teenage brain, a neuroscientist’s survival guide to raising adolescents and young adults”, by Frances E. Jensen, M.D.

Online resources and apps

Online resources

[Tips for communicating with teenagers \(childmind\)](#)

[Inside the mind of a master procrastinator \(Tim Urban\)](#)

[Procrastination: 7 steps to cure](#)

[Why the teenage brain has evolutionary advantages](#)

[Pomodoro Technique](#)

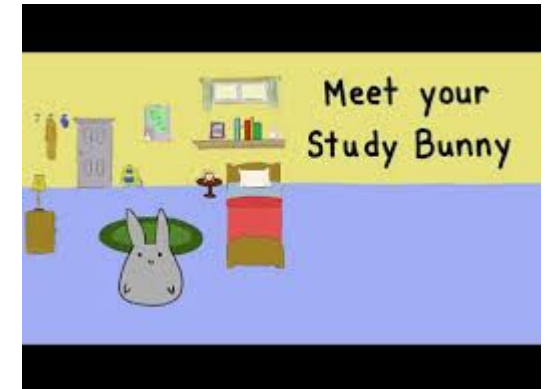
[F.A.C.E Covid - Using Acceptance and commitment Therapy](#)

[The struggle switch - dealing with anxiety](#)

[Student Wellbeing resources for students](#)

[Student Wellbeing resources for parents](#)

[Free meditations](#)



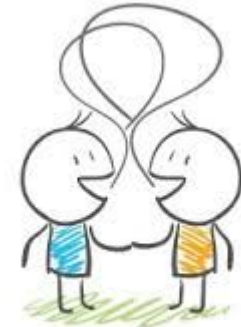
Other parents at ISH found this helpful:

- Routine

- Encourage and support new hobbies and home based projects.
- Help with planning to feel less overwhelmed.
- Find meaningful chores to do.

- Quality family time

- Cook together, and eating three (healthy) meals together.
- Interesting dialogues; showing an interest in each other.
 - Also about what is happening in the world and what is in your control and what not, to stay positive, understand the temporality of this unusual situation and privilege.
- Exercise together (e.g. walks in nature, sports, bike rides).



- Self care practices to stay sane as an individual (your teenager and you!)

- Reading, music, a walk: chose a moment you enjoy. For you.
- Keep in touch with friends and family.