

CONSIDERING CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DECISIONS TEENAGERS
FACE THAT CAN AFFECT THEIR HEALTH?

TRUE / FALSE STATEMENTS

- For the true / false statements, I will read them.
- You will STAND if you think the statement is TRUE.
- You will STAY SEATED if you think the statement is FALSE.

THE TEENAGE BRAIN APPROACHES DECISIONS
DIFFERENTLY THAN THE ADULT BRAIN BECAUSE
THE TEENAGE BRAIN IS NOT FULLY DEVELOPED
YET.

TRUE

- Our brains grow and develop throughout our teen years.
- The brain's prefrontal cortex (PFC), which is responsible for things like logic, planning, controlling impulses, and thinking about risks and consequences, is the last part of the brain to fully develop.
- While the PFC is under development, teen decision making is heavily influenced by the emotion and reward centers of the brain.

**THE TEENAGE BRAIN FINISHES DEVELOPMENT
AROUND AGE 18.**

FALSE

- The brain does not finish developing until a person's mid to late 20's.
- This means the PFC is not fully developed until that time.

THE TEENAGE BRAIN HAS A TREMENDOUS
CAPACITY TO LEARN NEW THINGS AND
ACTUALLY LEARNS FASTER THAN THE ADULT
BRAIN.

TRUE

- Because of the growth and development occurring in the brain during adolescence, the brain is in a great position to learn new things.
- In fact, early childhood and adolescence are two windows of opportunity when the brain is most flexible and ready to absorb new information.
- Adults are still able to learn new things, but their brains are not as flexible and learning requires more time and effort for them.

**RISK-TAKING ALWAYS LEADS TO NEGATIVE
CONSEQUENCES AND SHOULD BE AVOIDED.**

FALSE

- Because of the growth and development occurring in the teenage brain, adolescents are drawn toward risk.
- This is normal and can be an opportunity as well as a vulnerability.
- It is an opportunity, because becoming an adult requires taking risks, like trying and learning new skills, exploring new relationships, deciding what to do after high school, pursuing a career, etc.
- It can be a vulnerability, because taking risks can lead to unhealthy and/or dangerous outcomes, such as taking risks with driving, substance abuse, sexual behavior, etc.

WHEN MAKING DECISION, TEENS ARE LIKELY
TO BE HIGHLY INFLUENCED BY THEIR PEERS
AND TO FOCUS ON WHAT COULD GO RIGHT,
RATHER THAN WHAT COULD GO WRONG.

TRUE

- While the PFC is under development, teen decision-making is heavily influenced by the emotion and reward centers of the brain.
- The reward center of the brain is highly motivated by peer acceptance and approval.
- When the influence of emotions and possible rewards is stronger than the influence of logic and reason, teens may not recognize all the possible risks and consequences of a decision and may overestimate potential rewards and underestimate potential risks or consequences.
- When teen make a decision based on emotion and possible reward, they may feel surprised when things do not turn out the way they thought they would.

WHEN A DECISION DOESN'T TURN OUT THE
WAY YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD, IT'S BEST TO
JUST MOVE ON AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

FALSE

- There is a lot to learn from decisions that do not work out the way we expected.
- When we reflect on these decisions, we can consider what happened, why and what we would like to do differently the next time.
- When we do this, we are actually using our PFC and building its strength.
- The stronger our PFC, the more it will influence our future decisions.
- Everyone makes decisions they later regret- however, not everyone learns from them.
- These moments are a major opportunity for us to grow and strengthen our brain.

WHEN A TEEN DECIDES WHAT TO DO “IN THE HEAT
OF THE MOMENT,” IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT THE
DECISION WILL BE BASED IN EMOTIONS, RATHER
THAN LOGIC AND REASON.

TRUE

- The more stressful a situation is, the more likely it is that the influence of emotions and possible rewards will be stronger than the influence of logic and reason.
- This is true for adults and teens. However, since teens' PFC is still developing, it can be overwhelmed by the brain's emotion and reward centers more easily.
- The more a person practices using their PFC, the stronger it becomes, and the more stress, pressure, or “heat”, it will be able to withstand before the emotion and reward centers take over.
- One way to practice using your PFC is to work on stepping away from a stressful or “hot” situation to calm down before responding.

ACCIDENTS ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF
DEATH OF TEENS AGES 15-19.

TRUE

- How does it feel to learn this fact?
- How might this fact connect to the fact that teens' brains are not yet fully mature and teens are more likely to focus on what could go right than what could go wrong?

TEENS JUST HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL THEIR PFC
DEVELOP IN THEIR MID-TO-LATE 20'S; THERE IS
NOTHING THEY CAN DO TO HELP IT DEVELOP.

FALSE

- There is A LOT that teens can do to support development of their PFC.
- You can think of the PFC like a muscle- practice makes it stronger.
- Anytime someone uses their PFC, like by pausing to think about choices and consequences, discussing a situation with a trusted adult and reflecting on a past situation, they are strengthening their PFC.

CONSIDERING CONSEQUENCES SCENARIOS

- For the scenarios, we will talk through them as a class.
- Be respectful of everyone in class.

- Dave has never tried taking prescription pills and he wasn't planning to try them. However, one night at a party, his friends start pressuring him, calling him a punk and telling him that everyone is taking them. Dave really wants his friends to stop pressuring him and he starts thinking about trying them just this once to get his friends off his back. Besides, he figures pills are better than street drugs, because at least they're legal. His friends tell him the pills were his grandma's, so if she can use them, he can too. Dave feels a little worried but says, "OK," and takes some pills.

CONSEQUENCES?

- What are the possible consequences of this decision?
- What do you think the most serious consequence could be?

- Mychal's grandma died unexpectedly and Mychal really wants to get a tattoo to honor her. The tattoo that Mychal wants will be expensive and it will take a long time to save the money. Mychal's friend knows someone who does tattoos cheaper than a licensed tattoo shop. When Mychal's mom finds out that he is thinking about getting a tattoo, she's okay with it until she finds out how he is planning on getting it. Mychal's mom says he might get a disease or the tattoo might look terrible. Mychal thinks she is overreacting and decides to get the tattoo anyway.

CONSEQUENCES

- What are the possible consequences of this decision?
- What do you think the most serious consequence could be?

- Raquel and Don met when they were kids and just got back in touch on social media. Raquel likes Don a lot. Raquel is 16 and in the 10th grade. Don is older, graduated a year ago and lives with an older cousin. Raquel's friends don't like him because every time they are supposed to meet up, he doesn't show and comes up with one reason or another why not. One night, Don asks Raquel to send some nude pictures. Raquel doesn't really feel comfortable with that, but she wants Don to be interested and doesn't want to seem young and immature. Don promises not to show anyone and Raquel says "Yes," to sending the pictures.

CONSEQUENCES

- What are the possible consequences of this decision?
- What do you think the most serious consequence could be?

- Sammy is at a friend's party and has had a few alcoholic drinks. One of Sammy's friends is hungry and asks Sammy to drive them to get some food. Sammy is really hungry too and would love to get a burger or something. Sammy knows they shouldn't drive after drinking, but hopes it will be okay since they've only had a couple of drinks. Sammy thinks that if they drive really carefully, it should be safe.

CONSEQUENCES

- What are the possible consequences of this decision?
- What do you think the most serious consequence could be?

- Jordan has been dating Riley for 8 months and they have been getting closer and closer to having sex. They have talked about being in love with each other and have decided that after high school they want to move out and get a place together. On prom night, they decide to have sex, even though they do not have any form of birth control. They figure it is a special night and everything should be okay.

CONSEQUENCES

- What are the possible consequences of this decision?
- What do you think the most serious consequence could be?