

## Adolescent Brain Development Webinar

### Participant Q&A (participants asked the presenter)

- 1) How do we transition from hot cognition to cold cognition? What is the process like and how long can it take? Is there a difference in response between males and females?**

I think part of that transition happens with practice and with maturity. We learned to better manage our emotions and I think these things take time. We learned a lot from the literature around coping skills for things like stress and trauma which is also hot cognitive state: calming techniques and how to self-regulate and having attention and awareness of when we are in the hot cognitive state. There are things we can learn and do and part of it is a natural part of adolescence...I'm not sure if there's a difference between male and female, I think that is a great question.

- 2) How is rebellion among youth in the U.S. different from youth in other countries?**

I think it is a really good question. A lot of the research around adolescent brain development is based among adolescents in the United States. I think the concept of rebellion would be interesting to think about in different cultural contexts. What is interesting is we know this increased sensation seeking and risk taking is seen in almost all species in adolescence. The reason for that is from an evolutionary standpoint, young people need to break away from their families for more reproductive witness. You are expanding the gene pool by getting away from home when it comes time for reproduction. That is how certain aspects of brain development are really conserved across cultures and even across species. How the experience of rebellion gets put into play, it may look differently in different cultures and different countries. It is a really good question and I think this is one of the areas where the brain science is still young, so we have to take some of this with a grain of salt. Know that we are still in the early exploration of these studies.

- 3) Personally, as a health educator, I struggle to have the conversation of promoting autonomy while at the same time having to talk about the laws around consent and decision-making. Do you have any advice or hopes for brain science informing laws?**

I think it is very important to be clear that promoting autonomy does not equal having consent. It is autonomy with respect to self-exploration and choice and that has to happen within a scaffolded environment for parents and adults. We can't just say you're on your own. It is a slow freeing up over time and we have to make sure adolescents have the skills they need to slowly expect autonomy over time, but I wouldn't want to confuse autonomy with consent because clearly consent is incredibly important. It doesn't mean you have autonomy over another person's choices.

- 4) What are some ways for teaching parents and caregivers about some of these concepts?**

This is actually the focus of our next Kirby Summit, how to work with parents and the messages we need, or they need, to be sharing with their young people and what strategies they can be implementing. So, this is a question we are thinking about as well. I think at the very least, this is like education and knowledge of power. Teaching parents about the developing brain, how the brain changes and how it is helpful to create more understanding particularly when you are

seeing adolescence move from cold cognizance to hot cognizance. Maybe that is helpful for parents to understand why that is so definitely starting with the education component. Stay tuned for more. We are giving this a lot of thought.

**5) What is an example of how we can incorporate social status?**

I think this is a really tough one. Those examples I shared at the end, the question is really like how we make a healthy relationship or how do we make delaying a relationship a high-status behavior? It is a tough question because we don't really think about our work in that way right now. This is where it gets into that uncomfortable zone. We could push ourselves to think about what that can look like. It may be something like challenging negative stereotypes and is there a way to frame that with young people so their rebellion against the stereotype leads them to making healthy behavior more high status. I think it is a wishy-washy example but something we are thinking about, about how we can make healthy relationships more of a high-status behavior.

**6) Due to fidelity of our grant requirements, we have to stay within the time limit and subject matter.**

I think when we think about these interventions there is fidelity to our programs that is really important, and we want to honor the research being done. I think about, for example, self-regulation and these are things we can add on in terms of some of our adult preparation subjects and is there a way to incorporate more than that? Strategies to integrate mindfulness at the beginning of every session. Integrating that part into your lesson. Honoring fidelity but also challenging conversations about how we can improve the work we are doing.

**7) How do we make things seem important without using fear?**

I would refer to the tips provided in our Kirby summit briefs, here: <https://www.etr.org/kirby-summit/> .

**8) Could you provide the study that discussed the driving simulated test and youth risk-taking?**

The relevant driving studies are the following:

- <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0963721412471347>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23707590>

---

**Presenter Q&A (presenter asked the participants)**

- 1) What ways, if any, does your current adolescent pregnancy prevention program harness a young person's desire for social status and autonomy to improve their health outcomes?

Participant responses:

“Our Peer Educator work appears to do this.”

"Taking a sex neutral stance, encouraging teens to decide when/what to engage in on a personal level and supporting them in that."  
"Youth advisory councils and peer leaders."  
"We engage some of our youth on our advisory group and actively seek their input in decisions."  
"We expose damaging gender stereotypes, marketing of unhealthy and unnecessary products like douche, and impact of alcohol on sexual decision-making."  
"Our program is a YDP to focus on youths' wants and needs. So it puts youth in charge of what we talk about and what topics we focus on rather than them being told what is right or wrong."  
"Looking for opportunities for leadership roles for youth in taking charge of their futures."  
"Using role plays."  
"Discussion of economic costs and life-changing consequences of unwanted pregnancy."  
"We talk about stereotypes in relationships, peer pressure, and cultural expectations."  
"Peer leaders/role plays/making the youth accountable for their peers instead of just self."  
"Focusing on the powerful relationships they have with their peers, trusted adults, and their love of new experiences by doing service-learning and encouraging other extracurriculars."  
"Teach how to identify triggers and self-regulate when triggered."  
"Harnessing the power of positive peer influence, small group discussions, talking about teen case studies."  
"We're a part of a PREIS project that train youth as Peer Educators to deliver the teen pregnancy prevention messages along with leadership skill development, healthy adult relationships, etc."  
"If you are familiar with Mark Regnerus' book, Cheap Sex, he talks about the economics of sex...that women should have control, but they are selling out cheap and the men respond, likewise and treat it cheaply. Empower your females to take charge."  
"Focus on goals...staying healthy to reach those goals."  
"We emphasize the need to understand emotions and identify what emotions they are feeling."  
"Allowing students to submit anonymous answers for questions is helpful."  
"They also like to share their point of view when given a chance."

## 2) How might you approach your work with adolescents differently based on the peer principle?

### Participant responses:

"Teaching young people how to handle peer rejection."  
"Provide opportunities to role play situations."  
"Group activities. Weekly clubs where they get to lead discussions and also do activities that are fun and informative."  
"Youth talking circles where they have group-led discussions."  
"Sometimes completing assignments allows various students to build on their strengths and develop the weak areas."  
"Provide a safe environment, where there are established boundaries, where all youth feel safe to share good rapport amongst the group, youth led discussions, etc."  
"More role plays that show youth the different and recent scenarios dealing with peer rejection. Have small groups where you can have discussions on the topic."

**3) How might you approach your work with adolescents differently based on the social status and autonomy principles?**

**Participant responses:**

- “When appropriate, discuss peer events happening in the school or classroom with the students in the class.”
- “Have students consider how a short-term choice can have a life-long impact.”
- “Have students identify future goals.”
- “Anonymous questions.”
- “Work on media literacy.”
- “Recognizing healthy, safe risk-taking.”
- “Group discussion of the freedom of healthy choices and how it will determine goals and success in life.”
- “Giving mini-projects and talking about their goals to mark how well they may be achieving them.”
- “Reinforce that students get to make their own decisions; provide a platform for them to discuss their pros and cons for different options in decision-making.”
- “Teaching breathing and meditation to help them slow down some of the hot cognition; recognizing triggers in hot cognition.”

**4) Jot down one thing you might do differently as a result of this webinar or something you have learned so you can commit to some actions for learning.**

**Participant responses:**

- “Listen before responding.”
- “A lot of relationship-building with the young people, educating them, giving them resources they identify that they need, guiding (allowing) them to figure things out.”
- “Review lessons to see ways to build in some of these strategies to increase effectiveness.”
- “Send more time giving youth time to rebel in a positive way and do activities with their peers.”
- “Allowing students to have a voice and treating them more like young adults than children.”
- “Apply some of the strategies related to Peer, Emotion, and Autonomy.”
- “Adding more info on different types of cognition to our session on Adolescent Development.”
- “Explore ways to frame healthy relationships and smart sex risk behavior reduction strategies as autonomous decisions and a way to rebel against unhealthy/dangerous norms.”
- “Talking more overtly about brain development with youth, increasing access to group work.”
- “Respect for their place in development.”
- “Shift my language that encourages more rewards and autonomy for the young people that I get to work with.”
- “Getting youth to understand their brain development.”
- “Inclusion is really important to help students who may have a language barrier. The smallest effort goes a long way.”