



SRAETTA

Sexual Risk Avoidance Education
Training and Technical Assistance

Series Two: Personal Responsibility

Healthy Decision-Making & Focus on the Future

Public Strategies

May 26, 2021



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES **FYSB** Family & Youth
Services Bureau

Welcome

Webinar Moderator

Cyndee Odom, FCCM, FCCN, Public Strategies

Webinar Panelists

Maggie Westrick, SRAS, The Ridge Project

Jane Anderson, M.D., Pediatrician, California

Maggie Westrick

The Ridge Project

Maggie Westrick, SRAS, Project Director for The RIDGE Project, manages two collaboratives in Ohio and Southeast Michigan, providing SRAE to more than 15,000 youth per year. Passionate about serving youth and families, Westrick also organizes activities to benefit families in need, serves as president of Sisters in Service, coordinates the Project We Care program in her county, and oversees the Ohio Youth Congress. Westrick has a B.S. in Child and Family Community Service. She desires to create a lasting positive impact on the youth and families in her community.



Jane Anderson, M.D.

Pediatrician, California

Jane Anderson practiced for 33 years at the University of California as a Clinical Professor of Pediatrics before her retirement in November 2012 and continues to serve there as volunteer clinical faculty.

Anderson has authored numerous articles on pediatric topics and has presented lectures on adolescent brain development and parenting in both the U.S. and China. She has received numerous teaching awards from medical students and pediatric residents over the years. She graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles School of Medicine and obtained her pediatric internship at the University of Southern California.



Objectives

At the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the concepts and strategies for incorporating personal responsibility and focus on the future into their programs
2. Understand how to translate the information to youth
3. Understand how to take research into practice
4. Learn strategies to incorporate into their SRAE programs

Required SRAE Components

- Ensure that the unambiguous and primary emphasis and context for each topic described in paragraph (3) is a message to youth that normalizes the optimal health behavior of avoiding non-marital sexual activity;
- Be medically accurate and complete;
- Be age-appropriate;
- Be based on adolescent learning and developmental theories for the age group receiving the education; and
- Be culturally appropriate, recognizing the experiences of youth from diverse communities, backgrounds, and experiences.

Required SRAE A-F Topics

- A. **The holistic individual and societal benefits associated with personal responsibility, self-regulation, goal setting, healthy decision-making, and a focus on the future**
- B. The advantage of refraining from non-marital sexual activity in order to improve the future prospects and physical and emotional health of youth
- C. The increased likelihood of avoiding poverty when youth attain self-sufficiency and emotional maturity before engaging in sexual activity
- D. **The foundational components of healthy relationships and their impact on the formation of healthy marriages and safe and stable families**
- E. How other youth risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol usage, increase the risk for teen sex
- F. How to resist and avoid, and receive help regarding, sexual coercion and dating violence, recognizing that even with consent teen sex remains a youth risk behavior

Personal Responsibility

Maggie Westrick

The Ridge Project



Personal Responsibility

What is personal responsibility?

What are the components of personal responsibility?



Personal Responsibility Defined

“Personal responsibility is the willingness to both accept the importance of standards that society establishes for individual behavior and to make strenuous personal efforts to live by those standards.”

(Haskins & Sawhill, 2009)



Personal Responsibility Applied to SRAE

How do we apply the concept of personal responsibility in the context of SRAE programs?

How do we apply this to topics A & D?

- **Topic A:** The holistic individual and societal benefits associated with personal responsibility, self-regulation, goal setting, healthy decision-making, and a focus on the future
- **Topic D:** The foundational components of healthy relationships and their impact on the formation of healthy marriages and safe and stable families



Personal Responsibility: Healthy Marriage Formation

When applied to sex and marriage, personal responsibility means that young people should avoid sex until at least high school graduation or entry to college.

When applying the Success Sequence, we see that personal responsibility means graduating, getting a full-time job, and being married before sex and children.

Economic stability is much higher if youth complete this sequence in this order. There is a 3% chance of living in poverty if youth adopt these behaviors

(Haskins & Sawhill, 2009)



Personal Responsibility: Unpacking the Components

Healthy Decision-Making

- Considering the outcome of choices

Self-Regulation

- An ability to bring self back to their personal center

Goal Setting/Focus on the Future

- Healthy relationships and family formation



Healthy Decision-Making

Healthy Decision-Making

- Considering the outcome of choices
- How do we help youth understand how they can apply healthy decision-making in their everyday lives?



Foundational Components of Healthy Decision-Making

- Goal Setting
- Self-Regulation
- Focus on the Future
- Healthy Relationship Formation



Healthy Decision-Making: Goal Setting

Goal Setting/Focus on the Future

- Healthy relationships and family formation
- *How do we convey to youth, in an age-appropriate manner, that goal setting improves their future outcomes?*
- Achieving smaller goals leads to the belief that accomplishing bigger goals are possible.
- Practicing healthy relationships now leads to healthy family formation in the future.



Healthy Decision-Making: Goal Setting

Goal Setting/Focus on the Future

Give students examples of how they already practice this concept in other areas of their lives:

- Homework (focus forward; graduate to next grade)
- Sports practice (play in the game)
- Band/theatre practice (participate in concert)
- Chores at home (trust with parents/trusted adults)
- Get dressed/ready for school (proud/social acceptance)
- Personal hygiene (health, both short- and long-term)



Goal Setting and Its Impact on Healthy Family Formation

- Working together on common goals and communicating those goals and plans for achieving them are the building blocks of relationship formation.
- When goals are set collaboratively, it provides space for the thoughts and concerns of all members of the family to be expressed.
- Youth learn valuable skills of self-discipline, commitment, and perseverance when they strive toward a longer-term common goal.
- These skills are essential building blocks for healthy family formation.

(Murray et al., 2016)



Healthy Decision-Making: Self-Regulation

Self-Regulation

An ability to bring self back to center

- Homework (focus forward; graduate to next grade)
- Sports practice (play in the game)
- Band/theatre practice (participate in concert)
- Chores at home (trust with parents/trusted adults)
- Get dressed/ready for school (proud/social acceptance)
- Personal hygiene (health – both short/long term)

Students who are defined as “self-regulated” participate proactively in the learning process—emotionally, motivationally, and cognitively. (Sahranavard et al., 2018)



Self-Regulation Defined

“Self-regulation is defined from an applied perspective as the act of managing cognition and emotion to enable goal-directed actions such as organizing behavior, controlling impulses, and solving problems constructively.”

“The act of self-regulating is dependent on several different factors that interact with each other, those that are individual to the child or youth as well as those that are external or environmental, including biology, skills, motivation, caregiver support, and environmental context.”

(Murray et al., 2016)



Proactive Learning Process

Motivation

- Students who are motivated to reach a certain goal will engage in self-regulatory activities they feel will help them achieve that goal.
- Self-regulation promotes learning, which leads to a perception of greater competence, which sustains motivation toward the goal and to future goals.

(Hurst, 2020)



Proactive Learning Process

Emotional

- Express emotions appropriately despite being frustrated
- Use calming techniques to bring back to center
- Manage emotions and understand what they are conveying

(Cherry, 2021)



Proactive Learning Process

Cognitive

- Cognitive self-regulation is significantly and positively correlated to social functioning.
- Students self-activate and self-direct efforts to acquire knowledge and skills by implementing specific strategies rather than just passively reacting to teacher instructions.

(Sahranavard et al., 2018)



Self-Regulation and Its Impact on Healthy Family Formation

Research has shown that self-regulation is linked to:

- More successful careers
- Better physical health
- Increased levels of relationship satisfaction
- Increased levels of relationship stability

(Shafer et al., 2016)



Teaching Self-Regulation: An Optimal Health Approach

Strategy to normalize:

- Optimal Health
- Healthy Decision-Making
- Goal Setting
- Healthy Relationships

How Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) and Sexual Risk Cessation (SRC) Models Promote Healthy Decision-Making

- SRA and SRC promote maximum safety for youth by ensuring that teen sex is not normalized.
- These two models combined allow programs to meet individuals where they are and lead them to a “no risk” status or keep them on a trajectory toward optimal health.

(Inanc et al., 2020)



Why Healthy Family Formation Matters

- Being born to teen parents has a negative impact on youth outcomes.
- Insecure attachment with parent or caregiver increases the likelihood of youth engaging in high risk behaviors.
- Impulsive personality is a risk factor for sexual initiation.

(Inanc et al., 2020)

Why Healthy Family Formation Matters

- Positive peer values serve as a protective factor for youth, decreasing the likelihood of engaging in risk behaviors.
- Connection to teachers, parents, and other adults has a positive impact on youth outcomes.
- Living with two biological parents at age 14 has a positive impact on future outcomes and healthy decision-making.

(Inanc et al., 2020)

The Role of Stable Families

Promoting Physical & Emotional Health in Adolescents by
Providing Scaffolding for the Construction of the Adolescent Brain

Jane Anderson, M.D.

Pediatrician, California



Overview—Adolescent Brain Development

- Adolescence is a time of rapid physical growth.
- It should be the healthiest time of life.
- But morbidity and mortality rates are greatly increased—because of initiation of high-risk behaviors due to immaturity of adolescent brain.
- MRIs demonstrate complete maturation/myelination does not occur until approximately 25 years of age.

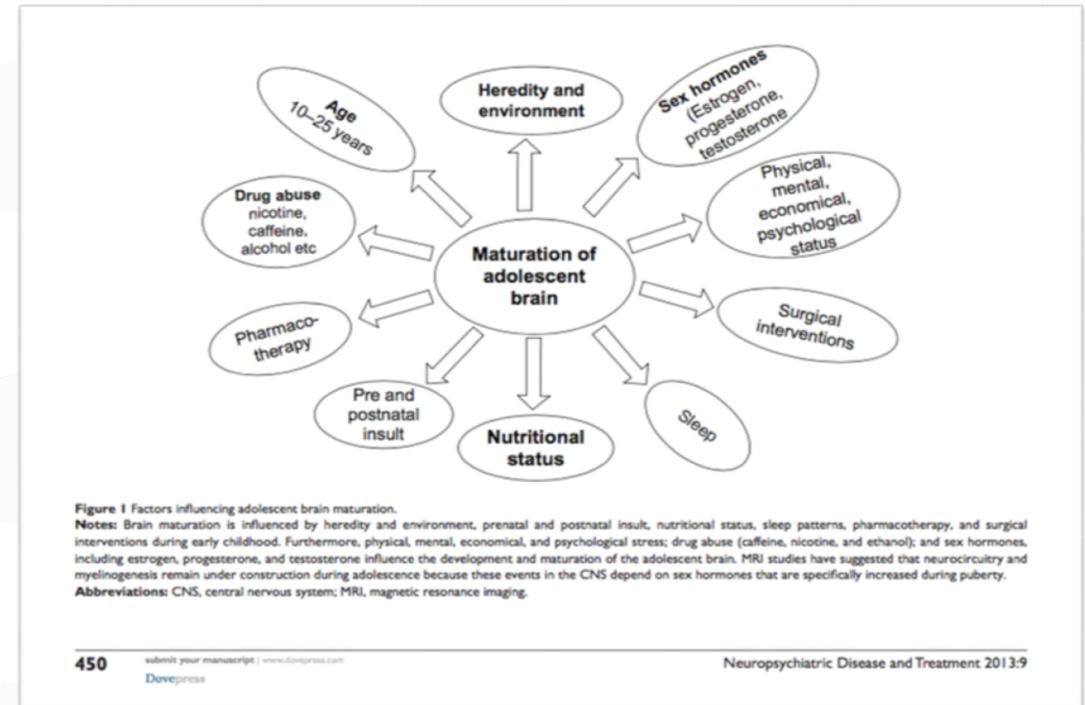


Factors Impacting Brain Development

- Age, sex
- Genetic control
- Environmental effects
- Nutrition
- Experiences/activities
- Family structure/parenting
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Each teen's developmental trajectory is unique!

(Arain et al., 2013)



Specific changes in brain structures

Hippocampus

- The area involved with learning
- Memory

Cerebellum

- Navigation of complicated social situations
- Emotional interactions

Prefrontal cortex

- The “CEO” of the brain
- Strategizing, problem-solving
- Abstract reasoning
- Moral intelligence

Amygdala/limbic system

- The “pleasure-reward” system



Consequences of Immaturity

Poor connections between lobes and prefrontal cortex (PFC)

- Adolescents are less able to interpret people's emotions due to poor connection between amygdala and PFC.

Hormonal responses of pleasure-reward system are immature

- Dopamine levels are higher, so teens require more excitement to generate a positive response.
- Adolescents are more likely to become addicted to pleasurable activities.

Immature lobes more susceptible to adverse effects of alcohol, marijuana, nicotine

- Hippocampus – learning center – easily damaged
- The younger the age at exposure, the greater and more long-lasting are the negative effects.

(Arain et al., 2013)

Epigenesis: Interaction of Genes and Environment

Scientists used to debate: “Nature or Nurture”? What influences behavior?

Now we know nature and nurture work together to influence brain development.

- One-third to one-half of our 30,000 genes are involved with development and regulation of the nervous system.
- 50% of those genes contain regulator proteins that depend upon external environmental stimulation to be activated.

So... experiences can lead to a cascade of chemical and hormonal changes that contribute to final adolescent brain structure.

(National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2019)

The Good News

- Stable families and nurturing parenting can help overcome the negative aspects of the immature adolescent brain!
- Stable families can help protect the adolescent by “becoming each lobe of the brain” for the teen. (Whittle et al., 2014)

Benefits of Nurturing Parents

- Provide the “scaffolding” to protect the brain while it develops
- Help protect adolescent from harmful influences that could damage brain development
- Provide help with “CEO” functions
 - Decision-making
 - Strategizing
- Assist teen in navigating complicated social situations/ understanding others’ emotions
- Provide positive “risk-taking” experiences
 - Volunteering
 - Outdoor adventures—river rafting



Specific Benefits of Families — Academics

- Angela L. Duckworth’s research on persistence and self-control is extensive. Her studies show that persistence/self-discipline/self-control are better predictors of academic achievement than IQ (Duckworth, 2019).
- In 2007, Duckworth and her colleagues introduced the term “grit” to define “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (Duckworth et al., 2007).
- Adolescents are more likely to demonstrate persistence when both parents are present.
- Researchers at the University of Texas found fathers were important even in low-income, ethnic minority families with parents who were not proficient in English (Suizzo et al., 2017).



Specific Benefits of Families — Academics

- A meta-analysis of 66 studies evaluating the relationship between father involvement and educational outcomes of urban children demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship for both white and minority children (Jeynes, 2015).
 - The benefit of paternal involvement was seen for both younger children (ages 1-10) and older children (ages 11-20).
- Using data from the three waves of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, researchers differentiated the impact of various home situations (Whitney, 2017).
 - **“Adolescents in families with both biological parents consistently outperformed their peers, indicating that a stable family is an important aspect of children’s outcomes.”**



Specific Benefits of Families — Academics

Families are important internationally.

- Using data on students from 33 developed countries who participated in the Programme for International Students Assessment in 2012, researchers found: **“the absence of fathers from the household... is associated with adverse outcomes for children in virtually all developed countries.”**

(Radl et al., 2017)



Specific Benefits of Families — Physical Health

- Using data from a longitudinal study in the United States, researchers evaluated adolescent physical health, behavior, and emotional well-being in families with different structures.
- **“Findings suggest that adolescents in most other family types tend to have poorer outcomes than those in two-biological-parent families.”**

(Langton & Berger, 2011)



Specific Benefits of Families — Emotional Well-Being

- 17,000 children in England, Scotland, and Wales were followed from birth through age 42 years.
- Complete mental health data was available at 16 and 33 years of age.
- **“Father involvement at age 7 protected against psychological maladjustment in adolescents from non-intact families.”** (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003)
- The same researchers evaluated data on 1,344 adolescent boys in Britain and found father involvement protected children from extreme victimization.
- **“There was evidence relating to a buffering effect of father involvement in that father involvement protected children from extreme victimization.”** (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002)



Specific Benefits of Families — Emotional Well-Being

The United Kingdom Millennium Cohort Study is a prospective study of more than 18,000 children born between September 2000 and January 2002.

- Researchers found a father's departure in late childhood to early adolescence was more detrimental to mental health than if children were younger.
 - 16% increase in emotional difficulties
 - 8% increase in conduct issues
- Overall increase in anxiety and depression in both boys and girls
- Increase in aggression in boys

(Fitzsimons & Villadsen, 2019)



Specific Benefits of Families — Emotional Well-Being

Prospective study of 805 families in New York counties were followed for eight years.

- 20% experienced divorce or death of father during study.
- **“Children in single-mother families were three times more at risk for conduct disorder, almost two times more at risk for overanxiety disorder, and almost three times more at risk for separation anxiety disorder than youth in intact families.”**

(Kasen et al.,1996)



Specific Benefits of Families — Emotional Well-Being

- Utilizing data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, authors found: **“Father-adolescent relationship has an independent impact on adolescents’ psychological well-being beyond the mother-adolescent relationship.”**
- These finding underscore fathers’ unique direct contribution to their children’s psychological well-being.

(Videon, 2005)



Specific Benefits of Families — Less Risk of Involvement in Justice System

Father absence contributes to an increased risk of incarceration.

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth
 - Followed adolescents (ages 14-17) for 15 to 30 years
 - Found that children born to single mothers had higher incarceration odds

“Youths in father-absent households still had significantly higher odds of incarceration than those in mother-father families. Youths who never had a father in the household experienced the highest odds.”

(Harper & McLanahan, 2004)



Specific Benefits of Families — Less Risk of Involvement in Justice System

- Researchers from the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Institute of Justice surveyed 835 male inmates in four states as well as 1,663 high school students.
- They were interested in the behavior of simultaneously dealing drugs and carrying weapons.
- Researchers found that children without fathers in the home were 279% more likely to participate in this dangerous behavior.

(Allen & Lo, 2012)



Specific Benefits of Families — Less Likely to Experience Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau in 2018 said:

- Children living with a single mother were at much greater risk of poverty than those living with both parents.
- **40.8%** of children living in female-led households were living in poverty compared with only **8.4%** of children living with married parents.

(Fontenot et al., 2018)



Specific Benefits of Families — Less Child Abuse

Children living with a single parent are:

- 8 times higher rates of maltreatment
- 10 times higher rates of abuse
- 8 times higher rates of neglect

(Sedlak et al., 2010)



Child lived with (estimated number from census 2005-7)	Harm Standard per 1000 children Abuse	Harm Standard per 1000 children Sexual Abuse	Harm Standard per 1000 children Neglect	Harm Standard per 1000 children All Maltreatment
Married biological parents	2.9	0.5	4.2	6.8
Cohabiting parents	12.1	2.4	12.6	23.5
Single parent only	10.2	2.4	19.6	28.4
Parent + unmarried partner	33.6	9.9	27	57.2
Other married parents (includes parent and married stepparent)	17.4	4.3	9.3	24.4

From American College of Pediatricians Position Statement on Cohabitation



Specific Benefits of Families — Less Intimate Partner Violence

In the 2011-2012 National Survey of Children's Health:

- 95,677 children aged 17 years and younger
- **19**/1000 risk for children living with married biological parents
- **144**/1000 risk for children living with divorced or separated mother

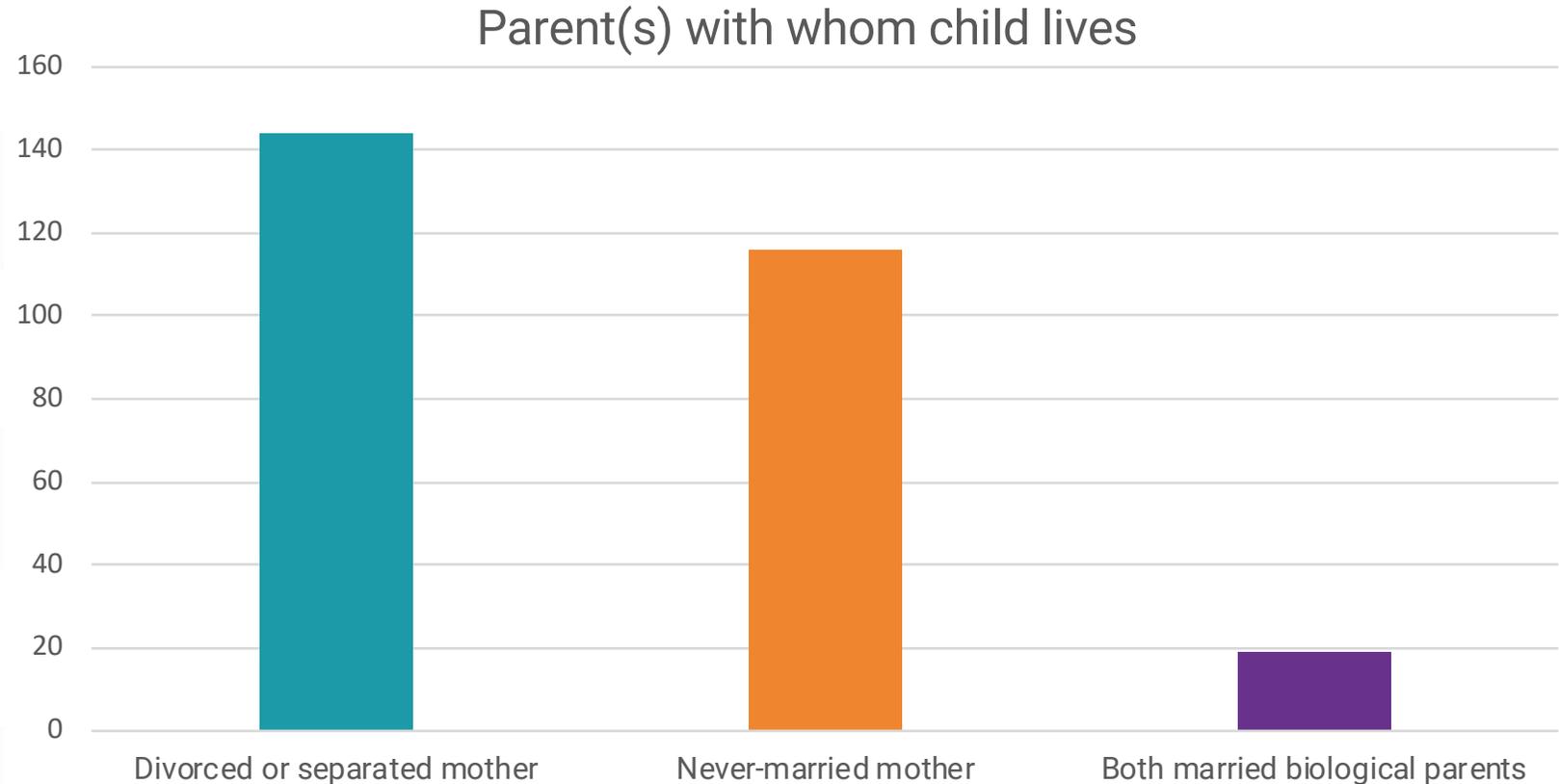
(Zill, 2014)



Exposure to Domestic Violence by Family Type

Figure 1: Children's Rate of Exposure to Domestic Violence by Family Type, 2011-2012

Number of children per 1000 who saw/heard physical fighting between parents or other adults in household



Zill, N. (2014). Analysis of public use microdata file from 2011-12. National Survey of Children's Health, National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Specific Benefits of Families — Less Sexual Abuse

- Developmental Victimization Survey conducted national survey of 1,000 children and 1,030 caretakers.
- **“Children currently living in single-parent and step families had significantly greater lifetime exposure than those living with two biological or adoptive parents.”**

(Turner et al., 2006)



Specific Benefits of Families — Less High-Risk Sexual Activity

Girls with both biological parents present are:

- Much less likely to initiate sexual activity
- Less likely to become pregnant

(Ellis et al., 2003)

A study evaluating factors associated with sexual activity of adolescent girls found father involvement was the only factor that “decreased the odds of engaging in sexual activity, and none of the other family processes was found to be statistically significant.” (Jordahl & Lohman, 2009)



Specific Benefits of Families — Less High-Risk Sexual Activity

In another study, the longer a young woman lived with both parents, the lower her risk of sexual activity.

“Women whose parents separated between birth and six years old experienced:

- More than **four times** the risk of early sexual intercourse
- **Two and a half times** higher risk of early pregnancy

Compared with women from intact families” (Quinlan, R.J., 2003)



Specific Benefits of Families — All High-Risk Activities

The United Kingdom Millennium Cohort Student confirmed protective benefit of families and found adolescents living in single-parent families were more likely to be involved in all high-risk behaviors—including sexual activity, substance abuse, antisocial and criminal behavior, and gambling. (Fitzsimmons et al., 2018)

The U.S. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health analyzed data from 10,803 students found “Except for suicidal thoughts or attempts among younger adolescents, for every health risk behavior studied, adolescents who came from single-parent families were significantly more at risk than peers from two-parent families.” (Blum et al., 2000)

A study evaluated adolescent well-being in two-parent families and compared those living with both biological parents versus those in blended or step families. The authors found that “biological children in blended families have worse outcomes than children in simple two-parent families.... These differences occur for academic performance, delinquency, school detachment, and depression.” (Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008)



Protection for the Future

- Stable families and healthy relationships today promote long-term health for adolescents and their future families.
- Stable families help protect adolescents from short-term and long-term harm.
- These protective factors are most likely found in individuals who delay sexual involvement until marriage.

Conclusion

- The adolescent has an immature brain that doesn't complete maturation until around age 25 years.
- This places the adolescent at risk for dangerous behaviors, increasing their morbidity and mortality.
- However, strong, stable families provide protection for adolescents during this time of development.



Conclusion

The take-home message for adolescents:

For the best chance of having a stable relationship with a loving spouse and to improve the likelihood that your children will have the best outcome possible:

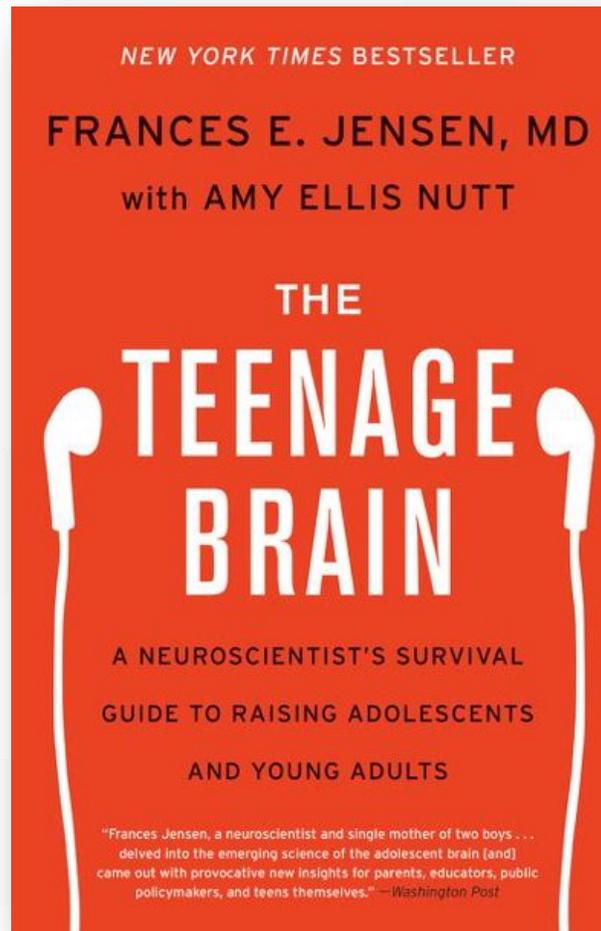
- Complete your high school education
- Go to college or become employed—or both
- Refrain from non-marital sexual activity
- Reflect on the benefits of a healthy family as you form your own



QUESTIONS?



Resources



Continued Learning

Watch for the release of a **tip sheet** to extend your learning on personal responsibility, healthy decision-making, self-regulation, goal setting, and the impact on healthy relationship formation and future outcomes for youth.

Additionally, there will be a **Cluster Call on June 2** to facilitate conversation among SRAE grantees on practical strategies, challenges, and questions related to these topics.



Online Resources

[The Exchange](#)

- Resources
- Comment Wall
- Events Calendar
- Training Opportunities
- Technical Assistance (Contact your Federal Project Officer to request TA)



Online Resources for Youth

[We Think Twice](#)

- Created by and for youth
- Numerous resources that encourage youth to avoid sex, drinking, drug use and other risky behaviors and to be active participants in [planning for a successful future](#).
- The site is regularly updated with new tools, quizzes, challenges and inspiration.



Contact

Cyndee Odom, FCCM, FCCN

Public Strategies

cyndee.odom@publicstrategies.com

Maggie Westrick, SRAS

The Ridge Project, Inc.

Maggie.Westrick@theridgeproject.com

Jane Anderson, M.D.

Pediatrician, California

janeanderson1516@gmail.com



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