

Marks Remarks by Mark Rowen Lincoln County Educator 1-29-09

Teenagers, wow. Sometimes it is hard to communicate or understand their thinking. New studies are showing there are two spurts of growth for the human brain. One is from infancy to age 6. At this point the brain is at 95% development. However, the second spurt happens during adolescence. The teenage brain is learning more complex methods of thinking and how to deal with new emotional experiences.

Up until adolescence, the brain is hard wired for a quick emotional response. During adolescence, the frontal cortex is starting to develop. This portion of the brain is responsible for planning, strategizing and judgment. It is also one of the last parts of the brain to mature, usually after age 20. It becomes important for adults working with teens, especially in organizations, to know this and allow them to have an active role in decision making. This does not mean adults should give them free rein. Expect teens to be rather pointed in their expression of feelings. Adults may interpret this as disrespectful or rude, however it is the way teens will react, it is that quick emotional response.

Some teens can act so mature one minute and be so irresponsible or emotional the next. We as adults have to realize they still need our guidance. If we can understand teens are still trying to organize and develop a part of the brain, it becomes a little easier to accept the behavior. Adults need to realize, a teen is a work in progress or “an adult in training.” This information is from the University of Wisconsin Extension.