

Pre-teen & Adolescent Development



By Margot Parker, Assistant Principal, Manhattan Beach Middle School

Insight into the cognitive, physical and social-emotional growth of our children and how to best support it

If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. -- Carol Dweck

Take a walk down memory lane



Jot down one powerful memory you have from your middle school years. It could be from an interaction with...

- a peer
- a parent/guardian
- a teacher

Think about what type of interaction it was

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Social

The bungee cord years...

What our children are experiencing...



Physically

- Major growth spurt
- Hormonal fluctuations
- Puberty
- Development of prefrontal cortex, amygdala rules

Intellectually

- Onset of abstract thinking
- Ability to take perspective, to see “grey”
- Disorganization, difficulty organizing
- Incredible creativity -- thinking outside the box



<http://steering-the-elephant.com/>

What our children are experiencing...



Emotionally

- Pushing away from parents
- Need for privacy
- Testing newfound abilities/maturity
- Insecurity
- Frustration with their forgetfulness, moodiness
- Increased risk taking
- Testing boundaries
- Internalize all feedback
- Impulsive

Welcome to being a parent of a teenager. Prepare for a large amount of eye rolling, emotional outbursts, & thoughts of running away. And that's just the parents.



What our children are experiencing...



Socially

- Insecurity
- Changing friendships due to different maturation rates
- Identity crisis -- daily (smart kid, athlete, class clown, all of the above)
- Self-centered
- Lack of perspective taking
- Hyper-sensitive to comments by peers
- Need to fit in -- masking their feelings when they are hurt
- Governed by group-think -- leads to poor decision making

Critical role we play for our children...



Acceptance

- Someone who gives positive feedback for who they are
- They're not all loveable all the time, but we are accepting of who they are
- Growth mindset

Relationships

- A trusted adult
- Sensitive to their emotional fragility
- Watching us as role models

Support and structure

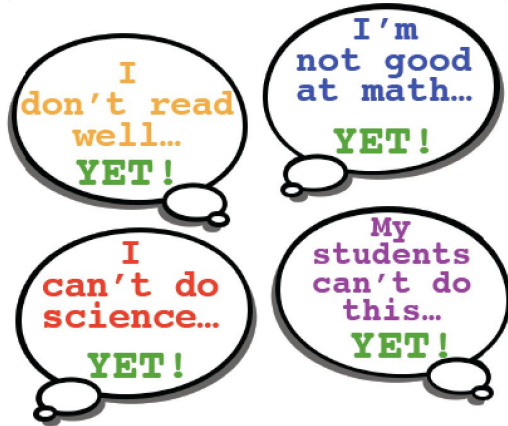
- Consistent limits
- Expected routines



What does a growth mindset have to do with puberty?



The power of **YET!**



Brains are developing rapidly at this time in their lives.
What messages are we giving our children?

- Fixed mindset
 - This is how you were born
 - Either you are good at or you're not
 - You have a particular talent/strength/weakness
- Growth mindset
 - You can learn very difficult and challenging tasks
 - Brain develops new pathways
 - Practice counts
- Failure is a learning tool

What Kind of Mindset Do You Have?



**Growth
Mindset**

I can learn anything I want to.
When I'm frustrated, I persevere.
I want to challenge myself.
When I fail, I learn.
Tell me I try hard.
If you succeed, I'm inspired.
My effort and attitude determine everything.



**Fixed
Mindset**

I'm either good at it, or I'm not.
When I'm frustrated, I give up.
I don't like to be challenged.
When I fail, I'm no good.
Tell me I'm smart.
If you succeed, I feel threatened.
My abilities determine everything.

Scenario



Your daughter competes in ice skating. She loves to go to practice, feels confident when she does her jumps, and is looking forward to her first competition. She can't wait to show her friends the medal she plans on winning.

The day comes and she does very well in the required routine and is in second place. She looks over at you and gives you the thumbs-up before she heads out for the individual routine. However, she falls twice during her individual routine and ends up without a medal.

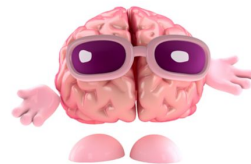
What is your response when you are driving home with your sobbing daughter?



What did you say to your sobbing daughter on the way home?

- Minimize the situation -- it doesn't matter, it's not important
- She has the ability, she's a natural, she'll win next time
- You thought she was the best
- You know she'll do better next time if she practices hard
- She didn't deserve to win
- She tried her hardest and that is all that matters

I can't do this!
I don't have
the talent!



I may not be
able to do this
now, but with
time and effort
I'll be able to!





Scenario

Your son has a new teacher. He comes home talking about how interesting the teacher is and how challenging the work is. He can't stop talking about what he is learning and how he never liked English before and now he's really enjoying it. He gets his first essay assignment and heads up to his room to work on it. You have never seen him work so hard on an essay and he was very proud of his final product. A few days later, he gets the essay back with a "C+". He is devastated and talks about how hard he worked and how he knew he was bad at writing. He says that he wants to switch the class.



What do you say to your distraught son?



What did you say to your distraught son about his English class?

- Minimize the situation -- it doesn't matter, it's not important, it's one grade
- He has the ability, he'll get an "A" next time, the teacher doesn't know him yet
 - You thought it was his best writing, you're proud of him
 - You know he'll improve on the next essay if he works hard
 - He didn't deserve an "A"
 - He tried his hardest and that is all that matters



Our next book



Planet Middle School by Dr. Kevin Leman

Date: December 1, 2016

Thank you!!

