Secrets of the Teen Brain: Managing and Handling the Teenage Years
Dr. Greg Lester – Course Outline

Part I: Understanding Teenage Brain Development

I. Brain Growth Principles
- *A. Disorderly*
- *B. Spurting*
- *C. Pruning*

II. Adolescent Brains
- *A. Most Notable Features*
  1. Gap Between Intelligence and Judgment
  2. Two Eras of Brain Changing in Early and Late Adolescence
- *B. Adolescent Brain Development*
  1. Growth of Synapses and Dendrites, Producing:
     a) Over-Intensity
     b) Crazy-Seeming Conclusions
     c) Overcomplexity of Problems
     d) Chaos and Mood Instability
     e) Primitive Abstract Thought
     f) Creativity
  2. Pruning of Synapses and Dendrites, Producing:
     a) Rigidity
     b) Identity
     c) Focus
  3. Burst of Growth in Frontal Lobes Producing:
     a) Planning Ahead
     b) Resistance to Impulses
     c) Increased Abstract Thought
     d) Use of Logic and Examination of Consequences
        (1) Why These are Not Yet Dominant in Adolescent Functioning
        (2) Instead See:
        (a) “Adolescent Hypocrisy”

(b) Pseudo-Stupidity
(c) Overcomplexity of Problem-Solving
(d) Highly Variable Impulse Control
(e) Increasing Grasp of Complexity
(f) Increased Goal-Direction

4. Amygdala Increases in Size Producing:
   a) Emotional Reasoning
   b) Increased Threat Perception
   c) Emotional Reactions Preceding ognitions
   d) Impulsive Defensiveness
5. Low Dopamine with High Dopamine Sensitivity Producing:
   a) ATingle of the Moment@ Motivation
   b) Craving for Euphoric Thrills
   c) Risky or Impulsive Behavior
   d) Pleasure and Novelty Seeking Behavior
6. Ubiquitous Testosterone and Estrogen in Brain Producing:
   a) Sexualizing Everything
   b) ABoy/Girl Crazy@
7. Melatonin Time-Shifting Producing:
   a) Increased Need for Sleep
   b) Shift of Sleep-Wake Cycle
8. Doubling of Myelin Sheathing Producing:
   a) Quick Reactions
   b) Rigidity
9. Crash of Serotonin Levels Producing:
   a) Grumpy, Surly Baseline Mood
   b) High Susceptibility to Experiencing Overwhelm
   c) Procrastination and Avoidance

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Part II: Talking to the Teenage Brain

III. What to Do?

A. Principles

1. You the "Outsider'
2. Lack of Pretentiousness
3. Lower Level of Emotional Arousal than They Have
4. Judiciousness in "Make-Wrongs"
5. Separate Motivation from Behavior/Consequence
6. Positive Reframing of Motivation
7. Identify Your Opinions as Such
8. Explain Others
9. Nag When You Want them to Do Something

B. Specifics for Brain Sections

1. Targeting the Frontal Lobes
2. Addressing the Amygdala Reactions
3. Dealing with Over-Complexity
4. Helping with the Pruning
5. Dealing with the Dopamine Sensitivity
6. Handling the Myelin Sheathing Increase
7. Talking into the Serotonin Deficit
8. Planning Given the Melatonin Shift
9. Handling those Pesky Hormones

C. What Not to Do

1. Moralize
2. Traumatize
3. Predict Current Function into Future Function