

Understanding your brain during adolescence

Your brain goes through a period of rapid growth and change during puberty. As well as your brain, your body changes and your emotions can feel intense. But here's the thing: everything you're experiencing is part of growing up—and it's completely normal.

Your brain is still growing

As a teenager, your brain is developing fast. The part that helps you make decisions and make judgements (called the frontal cortex), isn't fully developed yet. That's why you might make choices that seem “off” to adults. It's not about being silly or irresponsible, it's about learning how to reason and take risks.

The speech area of our brain is not yet fully developed either at this stage, and right now, it's controlled by the ‘gut reaction’. It's a very reactive part of the brain that responds to when you might feel stressed, scared or misunderstood. That's why you might say things without thinking or misread someone's facial expression. You're not trying to annoy people, it's just how your brain is wired right now.



Why you feel so much

Teenagers often get called “dramatic” or “moody,” but your emotions are real and valid. You're figuring out who you are, dealing with school, friendships, hormones and responsibilities. It can feel like you're leaving childhood behind and stepping into a whole new world.

You're not alone. Everyone goes through it—and it gets easier with time.

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Sleep is your superpower

Do you feel like you don't get tired until later and always need a lie-in? That's because your body clock is altered so you fall asleep later but for longer periods of time. While it might frustrate your parents, it's actually helping you grow. Around 80% of your growth hormone is released while you sleep.



So yes, your sleep is important. Without it, you'll feel cranky, tired and out of sorts.

It can feel childish to have a bedtime, even a late one, but a bedtime routine can be helpful. To help your body rest, you can try:

- Go to bed at the same time each night
- Avoid screens and caffeine before bed
- Wind down at least 30 minutes before sleep

Even small changes can help you feel more awake and focused during the day.

As time passes, our hormones will reprogram our internal body clocks, meaning you'll need less sleep and find it easier to wake up earlier. Then you might not feel so tired after an evening of doomscrolling... but don't make this a habit!



Your past shapes your present

If your childhood was full of fun and support, your brain has a strong foundation to help you through teenage challenges. But if things were difficult growing up, your brain might be more sensitive to stress now and find it hard to cope with changes. That's okay.

What helps? Having calm, understanding friends and adults around you. People who listen, support you and help you make sense of things. This support helps your brain grow stronger and more resilient.

This resource has been created with the help of Lily, age 16.

Togetherness is here to help you understand emotional health, relationships, brain development and how to support your mental wellbeing.

If you would like to learn more about your brain development and how to support your emotional health, join our learning pathways for all preteens and teenagers and continue your learning journey. Head to our website below to discover more.



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