



**adolescent brain  
inside out**

Communicating and connecting  
with young adults

Yvonne van Sark, YoungWorks, 30-5-2013

All of a sudden...



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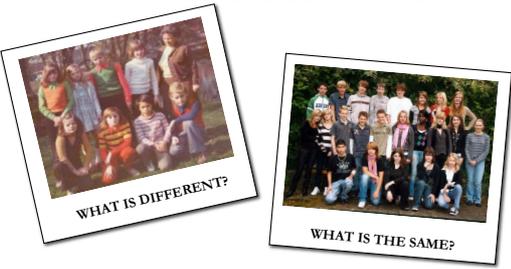
**Content**

- Being young in 2013
- The adolescent brain inside out
- The role of influencers
- Growing up in a digital world:
- Tips & tricks



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Youth in past and present



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**Two major trends**

- Youth culture is dominant
- Kids getting older younger

Results:

- Grown ups become insecure
- Youth gets overrated



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**The adolescent  
brain inside out**

## Most important insight

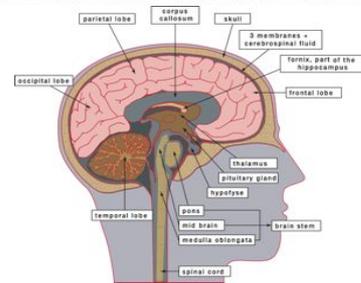


The human brain is fully developed around the age of 25



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## The adolescent brain



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## Connections in the brain develop



- Less helicopter view
- Difficulties in concentration
- Less problem solving skills
- From rational to emotional... and back again

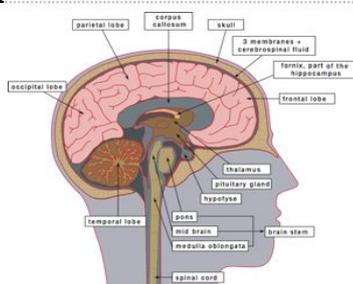
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## Paul (Age: 18)



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## Capricious frontal lobe



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## Capricious frontal lobe

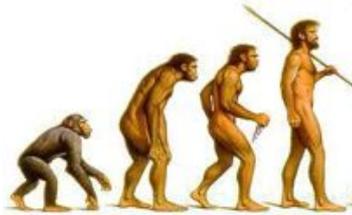


- Abstract thinking skills
- Difficulty with cognitive skills, like:
  - making choices
  - planning and anticipating
  - setting priorities (*filtering information*)

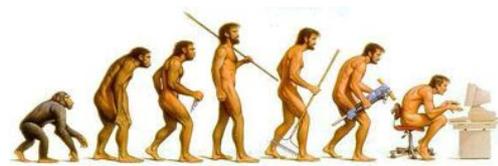
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## Frontal lobe

Frontal lobe distinguishes us from other primates



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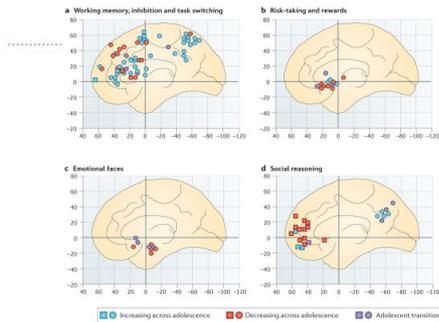
## Recent insight

*"Ze zetten de prefrontale cortex wel in als ze ergens gemotiveerd voor zijn en het nut er van inzien."*

*"They do use the frontal lobe when they are motivated for something and see the use of it."*



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## Fierce emotions

*Amygdale has upper hand*

- Less control over emotions
- Negative emotions upper hand
- Less empathy in other ones emotions



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## Fragment from 'Big' (1987)



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## Kicks!



*Increased hormone level*

- Mood swings
- Disability to see things in perspective
- Reckless behavior
- Less impulse control



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## In front of my webcam...



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## RIGHT or WRONG?



Adolescents under 25 are good at multitasking.

- They are able to process a lot of information at once.
- At the same moment: watching TV, MSN, listening to the radio, doing homework...

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## Multi-tasking



red green yellow blue  
red green yellow blue  
red green yellow blue  
red green yellow blue

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## Multi-tasking



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red green yellow blue  
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red green yellow blue

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## Multi-tasking?



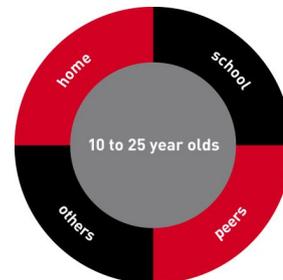
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## The role of influencers



*"As long as the frontal lobe is not fully grown, adults should fulfill a function as a substitute..."*

## Role of Influentials



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## Overestimating youth



Adults/educators overestimate youth:

- their online knowledge and skills.
- their ability to judge the impact of their behavior.

Adults underestimate the need for guidance and support.



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## Growing up in a digitale world

3 trends

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## Trend 1: Always online



People are unaware of being online 24/7

Explosive growth of mobile internet:

- Everywhere online, also in school
- Less safety restrictions for kids

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## Trend 2: Infobesity



Phenomenon that a person feels a pressure to communicate and receives so much Information that he can not handle it.

- 'Addicted' to online contacts and updates.
- Fear of not belonging...
- Fear of missing something...

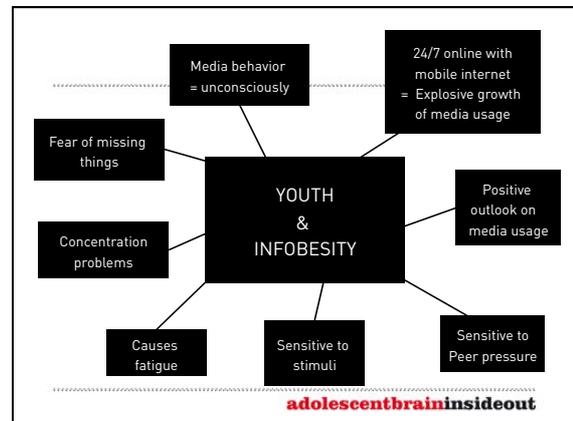
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## Trend 2: Infobesity



- Peer pressure in social media/ SMS
- Overload of information
- Lack of skills to filter main and side issues
- Difficulties to ignore stimuli/endless information
- The amount of time spent online is unbalanced

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## Trend 3: Online profiling



- Youngsters have to show others how interesting their life is.
- They are very much aware of their online presentation.
- To what extent does their online profile corresponds with their offline identity?
- Are they aware that future employers will google them

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## Online profiling



Facebook Farewell, Joep van Osch

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## What do youngsters need/want?



1. **Training in online skills**  
(technical skills as well as social & safety skills)
2. **Need for boundaries**
  - Online behaviour (*harassment, privacy, netiquette*)
  - Screentime
3. **Open discussion about values and social standards** in online environments. Possibilities to **check and discuss their online behavior** with adults.

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## Tips & Trick

How to use this knowledge?  
7 Insights to support Parents & Teachers

### 1. Be aware of your role

You can play a role as a 'substitute frontal lobe'.

Helping with complex tasks, like anticipating, planning, reflecting, etc.

But stay yourself. Don't try to 'level' with youth culture.

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### 2. Think about your expectations

What do you expect from young adults you work with?

And... do they know you do so?



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### 3. Show that you're interested

#### How was your day on the internet?

Let them explain what they do.

Don't try to be the expert.



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### 4. Develop a growth mindset



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### 5. Provide structure & clarity

- Structure is not the same as being strict: don't just check but give support
- Let them know your expectations
- Rather 1x a good conversation about appointments, than 10x 'whining'.

Clear agreements about: food, sleeping hours, making homework, regularity.

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## 6. Understand the 'social brain'



- Talk with children about their friends
- Online friends are friends too (usually the same as in the 'real' world)
- Think about improving their social relations, on an individual and organisational level

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## Friendship Machine



The day (All) friends  
GET TOGETHER

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## 7. Connect



Motivation is related to:

*Autonomy*

*Mastery*

*Spirituality - > Being connected to the community*

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## 7. Teach them to focus



Concentration is more challenged than ever.

Youth need guidance to resist online temptations and challenges of our time:

- Multitasking is a myth – explain it
- How to deal with mobile phones /smartphones?  
(*set social rules!*)
- Help them to create moments of rest  
(*e.g. to do homework without any stimuli*).

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## 9. Share experiences with colleagues



What are their experiences?

*With young adults in general, With this young patient specifically?*

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Information about adolescent brains:  
[www.puberbrein.nl](http://www.puberbrein.nl) (in dutch)



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