

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

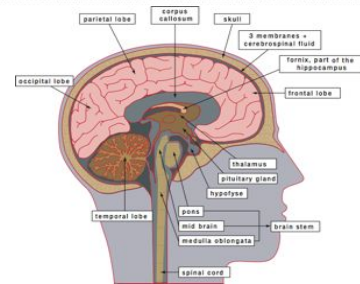


The human brain is fully developed around the age of 25



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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

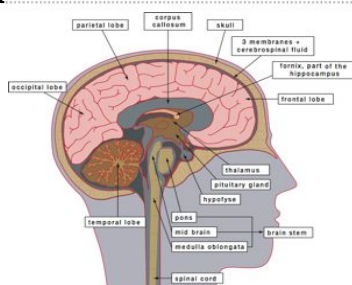
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Paul (Age: 18)



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Capricious frontal lobe



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Capricious frontal lobe

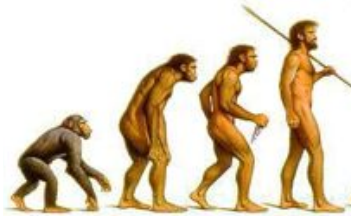


- Abstract thinking skills
- Difficulty with cognitive skills, like:
 - making choices
 - planning and anticipating
 - setting priorities (*filtering information*)

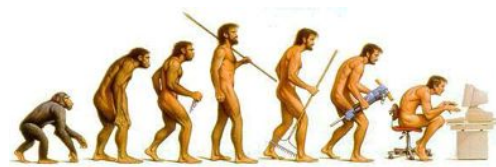
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Frontal lobe

Frontal lobe distinguishes us from other primates



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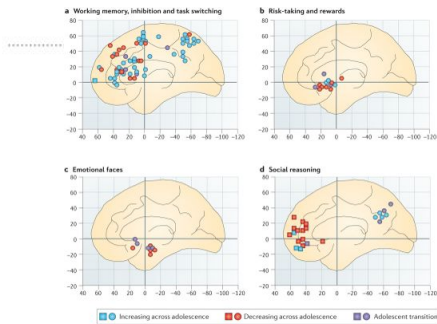
Recent insight

"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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Multi-tasking?



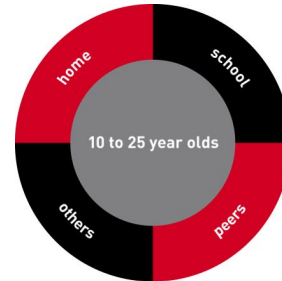
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The role of influencers



"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...

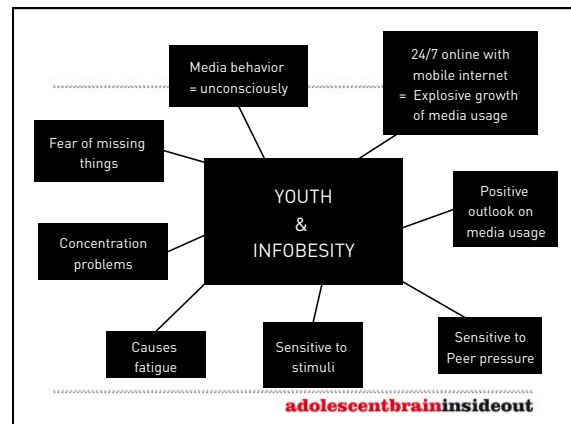
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Trend 2: Infobesity



- 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 (in dutch)



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