

NEW DAY NEWS

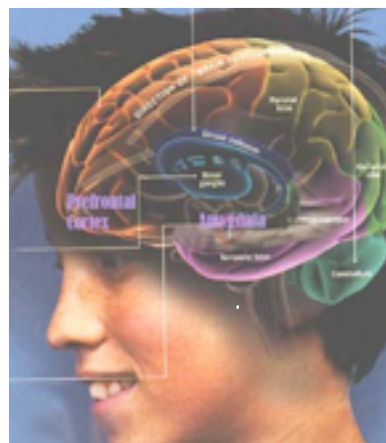


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WWW.STARTINGPLACE.ORG

THE DEVELOPING BRAIN IN TEENAGERS AND YOUNG ADULTS

FIVE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ADOLESCENTS' BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND USE



- 1** The brain's "front end," the part above the eyes, exists to slow us down or stop our impulsive behaviors. It considers the risks and benefits of our actions, and it helps us "hit the brakes" when we consider doing things that are too risky.
- 2** This front part of the brain is still developing connections to the rest of the brain until adulthood, so adolescents' brains lack some of the "wiring" that carries "brake" or "stop" messages to the rest of the brain.
- 3** Drugs of abuse are often available to adolescents. These drugs feel good, but they can be very harmful. Lacking some of the wiring for the "stop" message, adolescents' brains may not fully weigh the risks of drug use.
- 4** The two drugs that cause the most death are also the most available drugs: tobacco and alcohol. Late adolescence, before the brain is fully matured, is the peak time for developing dependence on these (and other) drugs.
- 5** Heavy drug use during times of critical brain development may cause permanent changes in the way the brain works and responds to rewards and consequences. Therefore, it is important to begin to address a developing substance use problem as early as possible.

(Source- HBO Addiction Series)

The importance of parenting



Joel Kaufman, Ph.D.
CEO

It has been said again and again that "Parents are the number one prevention tool". Parents can and do play a very important role in a child's development and growth.

The average age of children first using alcohol and drugs in Broward County is unfortunately down to age twelve. Research data indicates the more that we can delay the age of first use, the less likely it is that a person will have a substance abuse problem in adulthood.

It is important for parents to understand and educate themselves regarding child development so that they can more effectively intervene in their child's life. Some additional recommendations are:

- Eat dinner together as a family. Research indicates that the more young people have meals together with their family, the less likely they are to get involved with alcohol and drugs and more likely to do better academically in school
- Talk to your kids. For some suggestions on conversations and what to say, check out sites like Parents, The Anti-Drug at www.theantidrug.com
- Be good observers of behavior but at the same time not intrusive. Some signs of substance abuse and mental health problems are - changes in academic performance, missing or skipping school, mood changes, changes in sleeping habits, changes in motivation, etc.
- Parents are important role models. Your own alcohol and drug use will have an impact on the young person(s) in your family.

We want to make a difference

At the time 17 year old Austin was assessed, he was having difficulties in all areas of his life. His mother explained that someone had "kidnapped " her son. The Austin she once knew was an avid musician, average student and athlete. The imposter was a defiant pot smoking gang banger. He had been suspended numerous times and was failing all classes. In addition, he was facing charges for burglary. The relationship he had with his mother was full of opposition and disrespect. Austin's mother initially resisted participating in family counseling and felt that her son's behavior was unrelated to anything concerning the family. TSP staff convinced her to attend at least once. The mother enjoyed the benefit of family therapy from the first session to the last. After many weekly visits from the TSP therapy team, one began to see that Austin's drug use had stopped, academics improved and the opportunity to divert via drug court had been taken. Austin's mother once believed her son was "lost for good". It was rewarding to hear her thank the team many times over for "getting him back". Austin recently completed drug court. He has been working as a busboy at a local restaurant part time for several months. His mother's dedication and willingness to change made the client's treatment a success story.

Our services and how to contact us

We currently provide outpatient substance abuse and mental health services to youth and adults. Our services include assessments, individual counseling, relationship and couple counseling, family counseling, case management, psycho-educational and therapy groups, school based services, and aftercare services. Services are office -based and in-home and school-based. Our hours are tailored to meet the needs of our clients. Fees are based on a sliding scale and we also accept a few different insurances.

If you would like to set up an appointment or speak to someone further about our services, please contact us at (954) 327-4060. You can also check us out at our website at www.startingplace.org