

SUMMARY - Navigating the Turbulent Teen Years

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Dr. Roxane Lehmann

Parenting well during the precarious and pivotal teen years requires parents to act proactively. During the second Edina PCN presentation of 2007-2008 school year, Dr. Lehmann described the tight-rope parents walk in attempt to parent teens well. She described adolescence as an "in-between" stage in which teens lack the experience and brain development to make adult-wise decisions. The incomplete wiring of the prefrontal cortex and hormonal fluctuations are linked to quickness of anger, poor impulse control, and the tendency of teens to take risks, while they battle for their independence.

Dr. Lehmann emphasized that it is important during this unbalanced time for parents to build a safety net for their teen. Ultimately, teens still want their parents involved in their decisions, however parents tend to want more control than their teens are willing to accept. Raising a teen requires parents to stay connected, make rules, talk openly about the big topics, help them to learn from their mistakes, and guide them in reaching their full potential.

Dr. Lehmann suggests parents must be an "interactive consultant" for their teen. Avoid trying to micromanage their lives, being their "best" friend or being an inactive bystander. Most effective parents give up their role as manager, which worked well during the earlier years, and get rehired as a proactive consultant by mentoring, modeling ideal behavior, organizing home life and teaching skills.

Parenting teens is hard, humbling work. Parental influence is crucial. You can learn how to weave a strong safety net by:

- honoring your teen's agenda to extend away, but staying connected
- keeping the conversations going, so that you can help with their brain training and manage risks
- being a proactive consultant by taking a lead role