

Inside the Adolescent Brain



Why Teens Take Risks, Act on Impulse & **Feel All the Feels**

What's Happening in the Teen Brain?

Adolescence is a time of intense brain growth. Neural pruning and myelination are shaping the brain's efficiency—but it's far from done developing.



Synaptic pruning

Cutting unused connections



Myelination

Faster signal transmission

The Prefrontal Cortex (Still Under Construction)

This region governs decision-making, planning, and impulse control.

- In teens, it's still maturing—leading to riskier choices and emotional reactivity.
- Full development?
Around mid-20s!



Why Teens Take More Risks

The prefrontal cortex develops slower than the *limbic system*, which handles emotion and reward.

That imbalance =



Heightened emotional responses



Greater reward-seeking



Risky behaviors despite “knowing better”



Emotional Intensity Peaks

Hormonal surges amplify emotional experiences. The amygdala, a key emotion center, is hyperactive during adolescence, amplifying emotional responses.

Teens may *feel emotions more intensely than adults.*

This is normal—because brain systems that regulate emotion are still catching up.



Role of Neuroplasticity

Teen brains are *highly plastic*—meaning they can learn and adapt rapidly.

What this means:



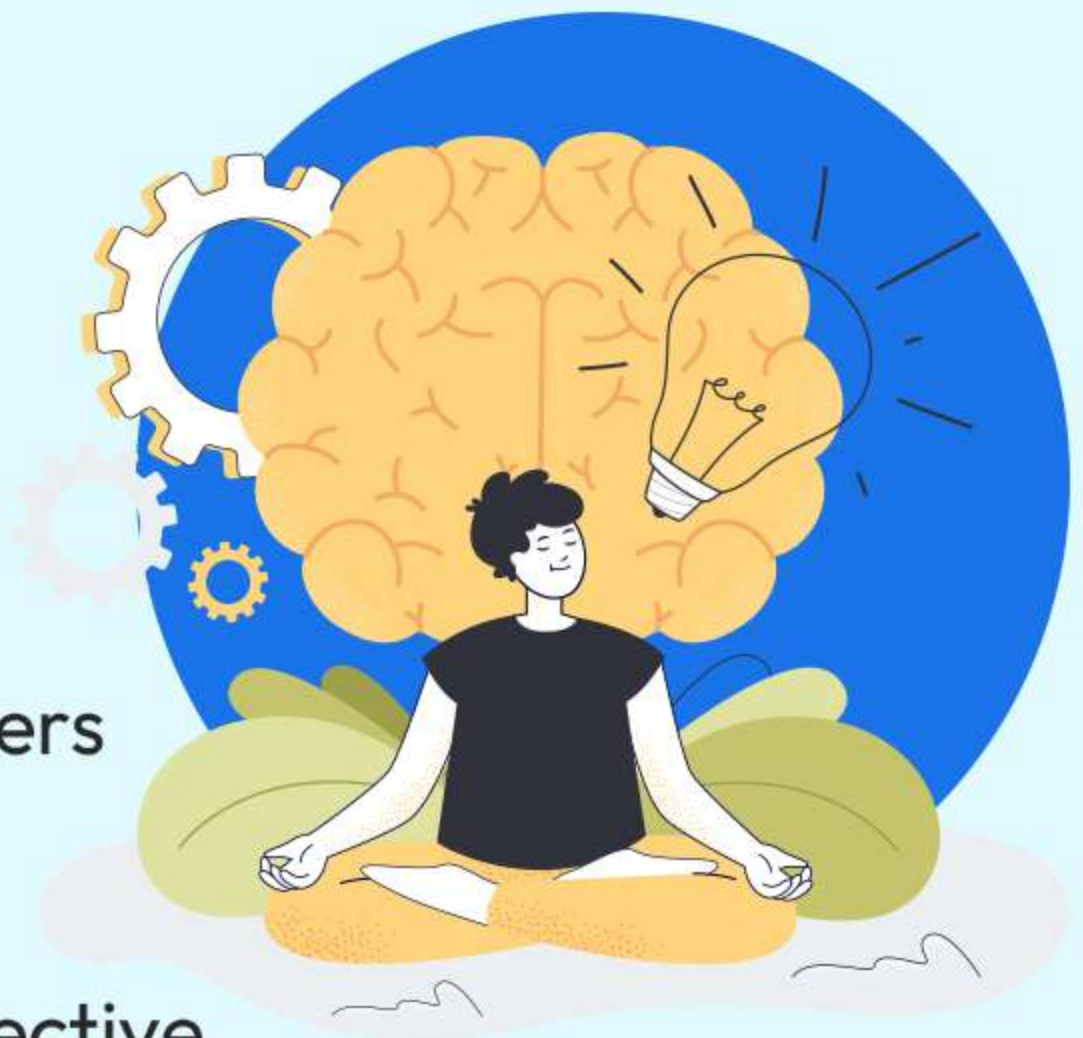
Habits formed now stick



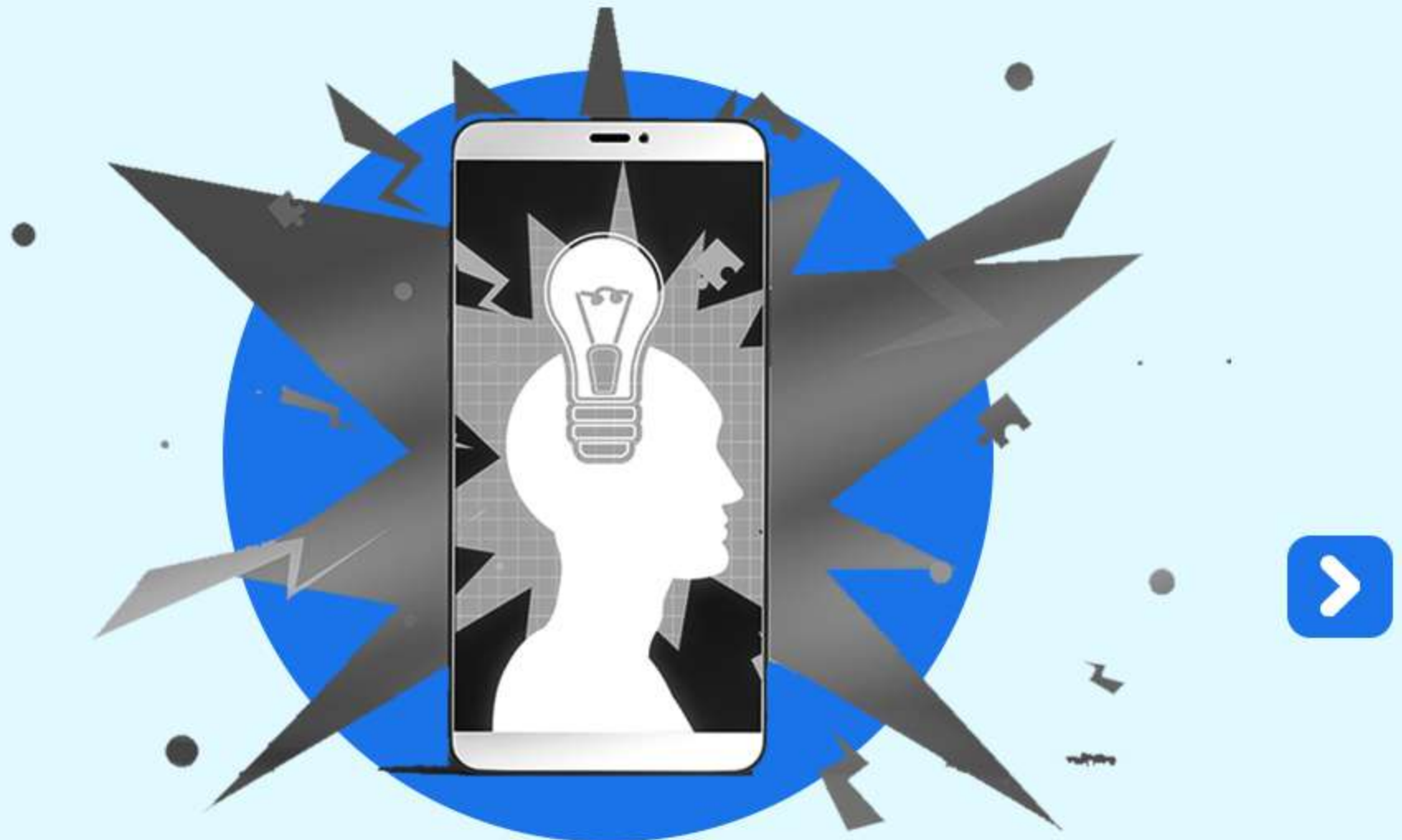
Positive reinforcement matters



Early interventions are effective



Tech, Screens & the Teen Brain



Dopamine-driven apps (social media, games) hijack the reward system.

The adolescent brain is especially sensitive to these dopamine spikes—leading to screen addiction risk. Excessive screen time can disrupt attention, sleep, and mental health due to overstimulation of reward pathways.

Peer Pressure & Identity Formation

Social approval feels more rewarding to teens.

The brain's reward system lights up when peers approve = stronger influence on behavior.

Identity formation happens in parallel with social comparisons and peer validation.



So... What Can Help?

Supportive environments + mental health literacy =

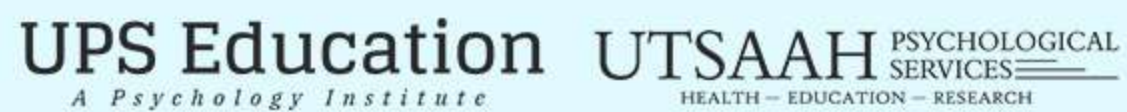
- ✓ Better outcomes
- ✓ Talk to teens, not down to them
- ✓ Guide, don't control

Adolescence is not broken—
it's beautifully in progress.

Understand the brain to guide it with care

The adolescent brain is wild and wonderful —
Keep sharing that excitement!





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