

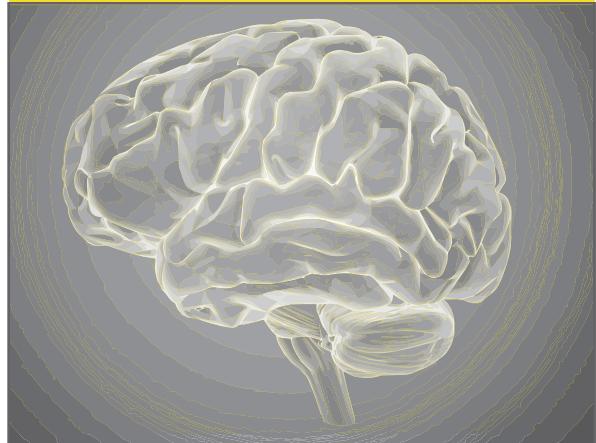


# Cloud9World's Parent Post

## Middle School

### Brain Development & Handling Academic Pressures

#### Encouraging Teens' Academic Performance



Understandably parents feel responsible for encouraging and supporting teens' academic performance as they have during the elementary years. Teens, however, are undergoing tremendous changes in brain and body development during the teen years that may require a different approach in supporting them with today's increased academic pressures. A good understanding of brain and body development during the teen years enables a better understanding of their challenges.

The human brain continues to grow throughout life. The fascinating concept of neuroplasticity describes how the brain grows, rewrites itself, prunes unused knowledge and builds strong neuropathways with continued practice. During the teen years, this rapid growth allows teens to learn new things quickly. At the same time, teens' bodies are rapidly changing with the release of hormones that impact emotions and physical growth, necessitating a need for more sleep. To make matters even more interesting, the frontal lobe of the brain responsible for decision-making and critical thinking continues to form through age 26, which means this powerful and energized teen brain often encourages risky teen behaviors. In addition, during the teen years, self-comparison with and acceptance from peers becomes increasingly important.

Considering the description of the developing teen above, it is not surprising that their ability to handle academic pressures also changes during the teen years. Most teens experience a natural shift in focus on peers, relying on past performance and skills to handle intensified academic pressures. One of the greatest needs for teens is learning to find balance between school demands and social lives, parents' expectations, and their growing need for independence. Parents can support by providing structure at home, modeling balance between work and family, maintaining positive and trusting relationships, and by allowing their teens to assume responsibility for their academic performance.



## Tips for Building Strong Teens

- Maintain frequent open & honest communication
- Model daily stress management
- Schedule time to have fun with teens
- Normalize & talk through anxiety together
- Provide support & guidance as needed
- Encourage supported independence
- Promote family relaxation activities
- Allow teens to experience natural consequences
- Praise efforts & positive choices
- Encourage a positive attitude
- Teach healthy self-advocacy
- Encourage positive self-talk
- Limit teens' digital life
- Watch for patterns of increasing stress (insomnia, etc.)
- Limit online checking of grades to once per week

**Encouraging teens' academic performance means allowing them to navigate & learn from mistakes.**



## Did you Know?

Parents can support teens in handling academic pressures best by...

Listening without judgement.

Modeling healthy stress management.

Reducing pressure through honest communication.

Assuring them of your love regardless of outcomes.  
Supporting them in negotiating struggles & navigating failures.

Helping them to identify causes of stress.

Understanding changes in the teen brain & body.

Practicing stress management techniques with them.