

Probing the Teen Brain

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Adolescence is widely seen as a period of moodiness and risk-taking. Much of that stems from uneven development in the brain during the teenage years. Eveline Crone has used brain imaging technology to identify this imbalance, and to study how it effects teenagers' sensitivity to emotional stimuli. Her work has shown that during adolescence, the brain regions that respond to pleasure and sensation-seeking develop discordantly with regions associated with reasoning. That can explain some of the impulsive behavior typically associated with teenagers. But Crone has also found that adolescents are extremely creative, due to an overproduction of grey matter in certain areas of the brain. Her work is helping parents, educators, and society at large better understand this special phase in human development.