



Achieving More Together / Cyflawni Mwy Gyda'n Gilydd

The NAS Post Adoption Training and Development Framework



- These materials have been developed for the National Adoption Service for adoptive families
- Their purpose is to provide a learning and development resource for adopters post placement
- These tools can be used by groups or by individuals.
- There is lots of information in the notes below each slide so it is important to read these too as they provide much more information, and some useful ideas for more reading.

Parenting Our Teenagers



Learning Outcomes



By the end of this course, participants will have:-

- Learnt about teenage brain development, adolescence and the impact on behaviour
- Explored some communication skills that can be used to maintain relationships
- Understood more about the importance of identity, social development and presentation in adolescence
- Considered contact with birth family members and the importance of relevant life story work
- Increased awareness of social media

Your journey to parenting a teen



- Your expectations of them hitting their teens
- Your experience of your young person hitting their teens
- How your adopted teen might compare to those in birth families

Some ideas about adolescence

- It's **HORMONES!**
- It's **CULTURAL** – we never did that in my day!
- It's the **NEED FOR INDEPENDENCE**
- It's **EVOLUTION**



What's going on in That Brain of Theirs?

Just before puberty, the grey matter in the prefrontal cortex – the part of the brain most concerned with thinking, logic and decision making – increases significantly



The 3 Phases of Adolescent Brain Development

1. Proliferation – rapid growth of brain matter and formation of new connections
2. Pruning – cutting away of unused or unimportant connections
3. Myelination – insulating of brain pathways to make them faster and more reliable



Why is this Important?



- We used to think that the brain was unchanged by life experiences
- The new watchword now is “neuroplasticity” which is the notion that the brain changes as a result of our experiences
- There is lots of evidence that suggests that early life experiences can damage the neurons of the brain and its ability to produce new neurons. This impacts on people’s ability to deal with destructive emotions later in life
- The more stress you encounter early in life the bigger, stronger and more sensitive the amygdala will be

What do you see?



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What's different for Adopted Teenagers?

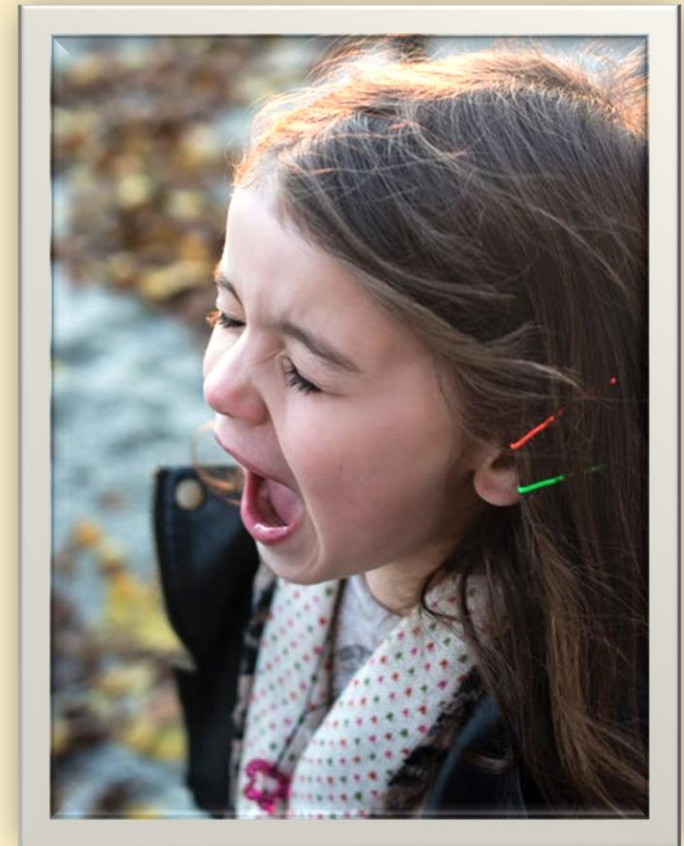
- Attachment
- Learning difficulties
- Identity
- Emotional development
- Reliving past trauma
- Loss



Teenagers are Still Children!

They need

- Continued parental supervision
- Emotional support
- Guidance and interaction from caring, grounded adults



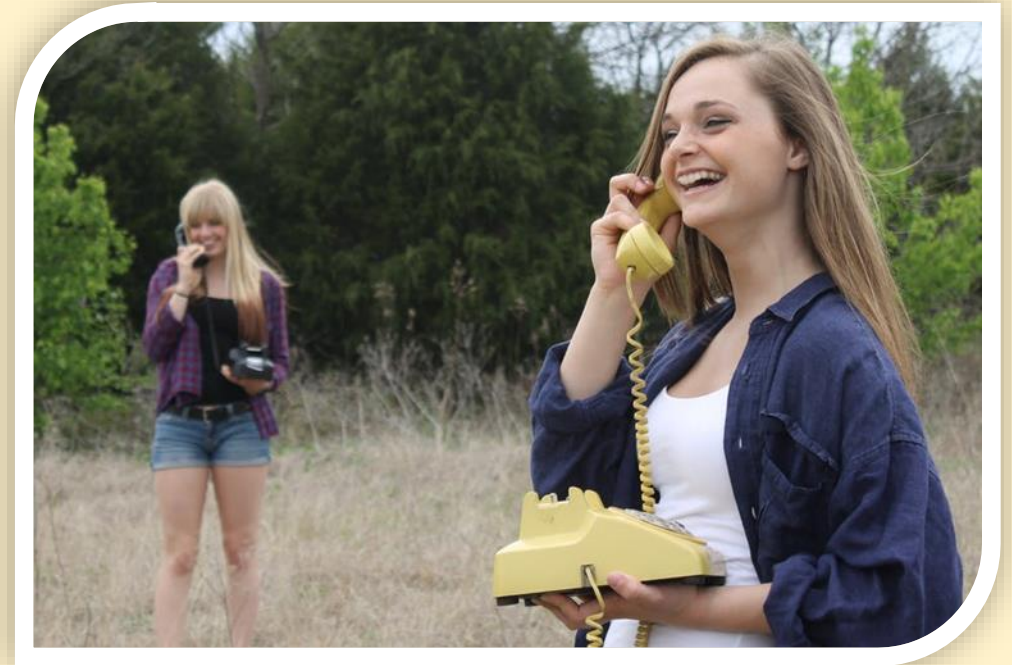
What can you do?



- Expose your teenager to healthy academic, social and cultural activities
- Set reasonable limits on isolated or passive activities
- Teens adopted from neglectful situations, in particular, need more time interacting with others in person and less time alone in front of a TV or computer screen
- Parents can foster attachment and set a good example for their teens by participating with them in social and community activities

Communicating with Your Teenager about Adoption

- Use teachable moments
- Provide full disclosure
- Develop a life book
- Prepare for tracing and/or reunion



Adopted Teenager Identity



- Give facts about how and why they were adopted
- Help them find missing information
- Offer all information you have about their birth-parents
- Help them develop a balanced view of their birth-parents
- Avoid colluding if your teen criticises their birth- parents
- Provide contact with other adopted teens and young adults
- Point out similarities between you and your adopted teen

Contact Issues (1)



- Some birth families have been known to use online sites such as Facebook to trace and locate their adopted children
 - Some adopted children also actively search for their birth relatives in secret; if they are successful, this can place them in risky situations
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Contact Issues (2)



- The formal process of getting in touch with birth families usually involves preparation and significant support
- The internet means online contact can be instant, direct and can happen without anyone knowing
- This 'unofficial' contact causes additional complexities; what may start well and feel like a 'honeymoon' period, can quickly spiral out of control

Social Networking Experiment

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pyJIERCrJE



- This course is part of a series developed by the National Adoption Service to support adopters after approval.
- These can be accessed at the National Adoption Service website.
- Please talk to your adoption support team for further information