HELPING YOUR TEENAGER WITHOUT RESCUING

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PARENTING LABELS
The human brain isn’t finished developing until the mid to late twenties

- Large increase in neural connections forming
- Use it or Lose it → brain forms new matter which
- More neural connections = a higher dopamine levels (i.e. pleasure seeking and risk taking behavior)
TEENAGE BRAIN BASICS

The Teen Brain

- Brain develops from the back to the front
  - **Limbic System** (the accelerator) Emotion, risk taking, immediate gratification
  - **Pre Frontal Cortex** (the brakes) problem solving, rational thinking, decision making, future orientation, consequences
  - **Striatum** Brain’s reward center, releases dopamine to the brain
    - This part is very reactive in teenage years making teenagers very receptive to rewards. Hyper responsive to feedback helps them learn faster
    - Connected to risk taking
THE DOWNSIDE TO RESCUING

- Avoiding pain and discomfort
- Child never feels the consequences of their actions
- Can escalate destructive behavior
- Stunts social-emotional learning
- Creates struggles with communication
- Low motivation
- Lower self-esteem
STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

- Communication
- Guided Independence
- “Rupture and Repair”
- Separating Us vs. Them
- Modeling
- De-personalize
- Allow opportunities for natural consequences
  - Debriefing/processing vs. intervening
- Boundary setting
- Why vs. How
THE OPPOSITE OF RESCUING IS RESILIENCY

Resiliency: being able to ‘bounce back’ from difficult times, setbacks, and other significant challenges. It includes being able to deal effectively with pressure, and get through tough times with good outcomes.

- Resiliency can be taught at any age and any stage of life
- Benefits of resiliency include:
  - Improved learning and academic achievement
  - Lower absences from work or school due to sickness
  - Reduced risk-taking behavior
  - Higher involvement with community and family activities
  - Lower mortality rate and increased physical health
  - Less depressive symptoms
  - Better ability to cope with stress
RAISING RESILIENT CHILDREN

**Build Confidence**

- Don’t accommodate every need
- Avoid eliminating all risk
- Let them take charge sometimes
- Help them manage their emotions

**Build Competence**

- Teach them to become problem solves
- Teach concrete skills
- Avoid “why” questions
- Model resiliency
BUTTON PUSHING

Words or actions that a child uses intentionally to frustrate or anger someone during an argument

- **Building a Button Pushing Plan:**
  1. Recognize how are you being “baited”?
  2. Button pushing vs. personal attacks
  3. Develop the skill to Exit & Wait
BUTTON PUSHING EXAMPLES

Child’s Buttons

• Preaching
• Talking in chapters
• Labeling
• Futurizing
• Instant problem-solving
• Questioning their mood (“what has suddenly gotten into you?”)
• Not tolerating experimental behavior
• Collecting criticisms

Parent’s Buttons

• “You never let me do anything”
• “You don’t love me”
• “I hate you”
• Swearing, yelling, verbal abuse
• “You’re not my real parent. I don’t have to listen to you”
• Eye rolling, whining, improper gestures
• “I’m going to kill myself”
• Lying
• “Fine, I’ll run away”
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