



BROOKLINE COMMUNITY
MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Connecting with Families Program Enjoying the Middle School Years

The middle school years can often be a confusing time for kids, parents, and educators. It is a unique time developmentally and socially and there are several issues that every young adolescent seems to experience. At the same time that these issues can be highly frustrating, they are also exciting and full of possibility. Some of these issues include:

- A time of enormous physiological and neurological development/change
- Movement towards increased independence but still needing nurturance
- Formation of identity, values, ideals; Greater presence of conscience
- Moodiness
- Increased verbal skills and cognitive ability
- Realization that adults/parents are not perfect
- Greater concern for privacy; Focus on self
- Typically focused on the present moment with little thought to the future
- Expanded interests and abilities
- Greater ability to do work
- Increased interest in sexuality
- Importance of peer group and worries about fitting in; Frequently changing peer group
- Testing limits and pushing boundaries

A Few Resources

- *Teen Brain, Teen Mind: What Parents Need to Know to Survive the Adolescent Years* by Dr. Ron Clavier.
- *The Parent's Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting* by Don Dinkmeyer and Gary D. McKay. Excellent resource book for understanding your child with great concrete examples for changing power struggles, recognizing strengths, and changing negative patterns in a family.
- *Get Out of My Life, but First Could You Drive Me and Cheryl to the Mall: A Parent's Guide to the New Teenager* by Anthony Wolfe. An excellent "survival guide" for parents who are in the midst of raising teens.
- A series of articles in the NY Times about Middle School:
<http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/news/education/series/thecriticalyears/index.html>
- A PBS program, *Inside the Teenage Brain*, reviews recent research by neuroscientists and psychologists and offers online advice and activities for parents.
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain>
- An NPR story, *The Teen Brain: It's Just Not Grown Up Yet*
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124119468>