

Adolescent Brain Development

CASE SCENARIOS: CHALLENGING ADOLESCENT INTERACTIONS

Read through the case scenarios below and discuss how you would respond to a young person in the following scenarios. Refer to the list of adolescent brain development behaviors on the next page and apply these characteristics to each scenario.

Scenario	Gut Feeling	Negative Assumptions	Alternative Explanation/ Developmental Characteristics
<p>1. You work at the front desk. 17 year-old Shayla is 10 minutes late for her appointment, and she comes up to the front desk to check in. She does not look up at you, but instead, she stands at the desk and appears to be texting. In an upbeat voice, you say, "Hello! Do you have an appointment?" She continues to look at her phone, frowns, and keeps texting while you wait. Finally, she looks up and says, "What?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annoyed • Mad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her text is not important • This generation doesn't have manners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe her dad's car didn't start, she had to take the bus, and her mom is texting her telling her to come home and watch her little brother • Developmentally – she's more aware of her own needs than others'
<p>2. Darren's wearing saggy pants, and his shirt says, "Please tell your boobs to stop staring at my eyes." His mother is standing next to him. When you ask him a question, he shrugs and grunts. His mother says, "Darren! They're talking to you! Speak up!" Then she turns to you and says, "Can you please tell my son that he needs to answer you and respect adults?"</p>			
<p>3. Jamie is 16 and is here for a flu shot. As they chat with you, they tell you they are nervous about getting a shot, and that they really need a cigarette. A couple with a baby walks by, and Jamie says to you that they hope to get pregnant soon.</p>			
<p>4. Create your own scenario:</p>			

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PRIMARY CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Prefrontal cortex (controls cause/effect, self-regulation) is still developing and limbic system (emotions & reward center) is highly active, which impacts...

- Decision-making, judgment, and complete understanding of cause and effect (actions/consequences) not fully developed
- Thrill-seeking and novelty-seeking – trying new things
- Tendency to act on impulse without regard to the risks involved
- Peer group more important than others
- Emotions more charged, can be harder to control
- Determining identity, conflicting identities, trying on identities
- Can be attention-seeking, or attention-avoiding, or both (!)
- Focused on self and their individual needs