

# Hidden Sparks Without Walls Parent Connection

Hidden Sparks Without Walls Parent Connection is a series of courses designed to bring together educational professionals and parents in order to improve the quality of the educational experience for all students, including those who struggle.

We hope that the information provided in these courses is helpful, however every child, family, and teacher is different and the strategies and techniques discussed in the seminars do not necessarily apply to every situation.

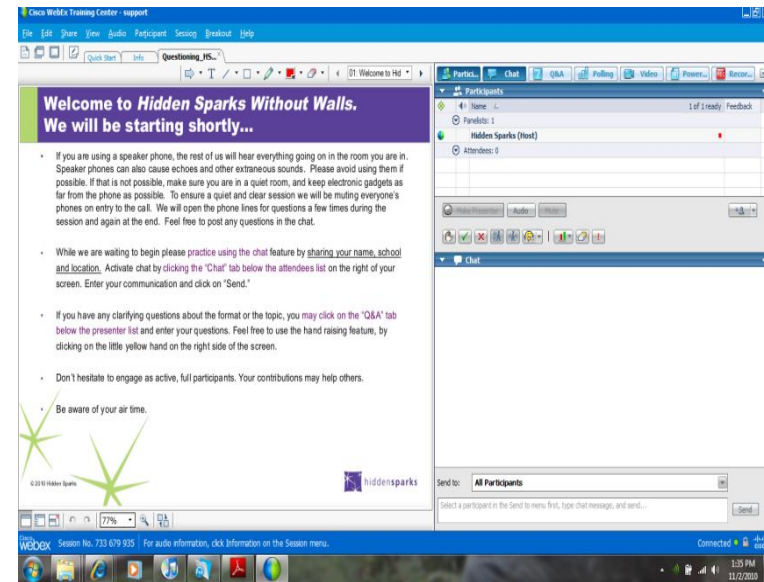
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Hidden Sparks Without Walls, and the Hidden Sparks program in general, does not offer evaluation, recommendation, or consultation services to individual students or families.

# Welcome to *Hidden Sparks Without Walls Parent Connection*. We will be starting shortly...

To alleviate background noise and ensure a quiet session, your phones have been automatically muted. Questions and comments can be submitted via the **CHAT FEATURE**.

While we are waiting, activate the chat feature by clicking in the “Chat” tab that is located below the attendees list on the right of your screen.



## When chatting, please remember:

- Select “**All Participants**” if you would like everyone to see your message. Select “**All Panelists**” if you would like only the presenter and facilitator to see your message.
- If you have any clarifying questions about the format, or the topic, you may click on the “**Q&A**” tab located below the presenter list and enter your questions.

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PARENT CONNECTION

# About Hidden Sparks

**Hidden Sparks** is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences will ultimately benefit all students, Hidden Sparks' programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching.

Hidden Sparks Without Walls Parent Connection is a series of courses designed to bring together parents and educational professionals in order to improve the quality of the educational experience for all of our students and children, including those that struggle.



# Balancing Love and Limits with Your Teen: Effective Strategies for Parents

With Dr. David Pelcovitz  
February 9, 2016



[www.hiddensparks.org](http://www.hiddensparks.org)

# Our Guest: Dr. David Pelcovitz



**Dr. David Pelcovitz** holds the Gwendolyn and Joseph Straus Chair in Psychology and Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University. Serving for more than two decades as director of psychology at North Shore University Hospital-NYU School of Medicine and clinical professor of psychology at NYU School of Medicine, Dr. Pelcovitz has consulted, published and lectured extensively on a wide range of issues facing children, adolescents and Jewish families. Areas of research and clinical specialty include family violence, the impact of domestic violence, stress management, transmitting values to children and adolescents and coping with trauma and loss. His most recent publication was *Balanced Parenting*, a book he wrote in collaboration with his father, Rabbi Raphael Pelcovitz, on parenting from a Jewish perspective.

# Overview of the Session:

This session will focus on practical strategies for parenting your adolescent. The importance of having realistic expectations about what constitutes “normal” adolescent behavior will be described and framed in the context of recent advances in neuroscience that enhance our understanding of how changes in behavioral and emotional functioning are related to the process of how the adolescent brain differs from the brain of a child or adult. Specific guidelines for improving communication with your teen will be discussed with a focus on how to avoid common pitfalls in parenting that tend to exacerbate adolescent behavioral and emotional challenges.

# Session Goals:

1. To give specific guidelines on how to achieve realistic expectations of your adolescent.
2. To summarize recent neuroscience research on changes that take place in the adolescent brain and implications of such changes for understanding why your adolescent might be more moody, challenging, and prone to stress.
3. To describe what constitutes “normal” adolescent behavior as contrasted to behavior that might be of concern.
4. Guidelines for enhancing communication and dealing with problematic adolescent behavior.



# Importance of Managing Expectations

- Elevator example



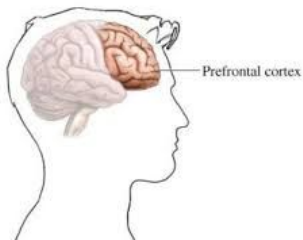
- Power of understanding what is part of what adolescents “do for a living” versus signs of behavior that is of concern



# Neurobehavioral Changes in Adolescence

## Brain areas undergoing remodeling during adolescence include:

- Prefrontal cortex involved in learning rules, emotional processing
  - Declines in relative size during adolescence
  - Some connections lost (pruning) and others added
- Inhibitory neurotransmitter (GABA) reduced in frontal cortex



# **How Advances in Neuroscience Enhance Our Understanding of Adolescent Behavior**

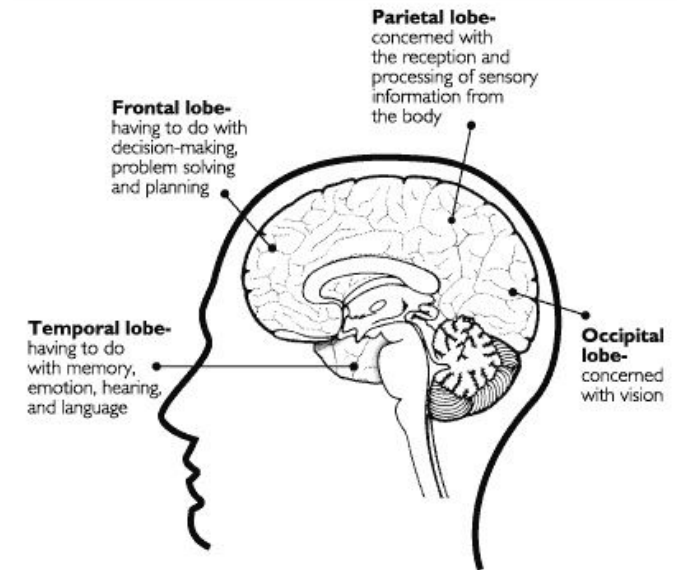


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# Neurobehavioral Changes in Adolescence: Amygdala

## Shift in activation in adolescence related to:

- Emotional reactivity
- Coordinating responses to stressful stimuli



# Neurobehavioral Changes in Adolescence: Dopamine

## Change in dopamine input to prefrontal cortex and limbic brain regions

- Plays a role in novelty seeking
- Involved in assessing motivational value of potentially reinforcing drugs



## Adolescent are more disrupted by stressors than adults

- Physiologically show an increased responsivity to stressors e.g. greater increases in blood pressure and blood flow in response to stress
- Higher incidence of depressed mood
- Respond with greater negative affect than children and adults
- Even when referring to the same activities often find them less pleasurable than their parents
- Higher risk for drug abuse may be tied to elevated stress responsivity

# What is Normal Adolescent Behavior?

## When Should I Worry?

## Normal Adolescent Behavior

## Distance from parents and focus on peers

- e.g. not wanting to be seen in car or movies with parent

# Need for independence and unique identity playing out on battlefield of different tastes in clothing and music

# Self-Consciousness

- “universal audience”
- egocentrism





## Minor problems that are within “normal” limits

- Texting, heavy use of digital media
- Messy room
- Clothing
- Eating habits
- Forgetfulness about chores
- Intermittent negative attitude



# **Guidelines for Effectively Parenting Your Adolescent**



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# Fostering Healthy Communication

**Limit setting and supervising adolescent behavior is only helpful in the context of good relationships**

- Rules without relationships equal rebellion

**Climate that fosters communication is child raised with a tradition of relationship characterized by emotional safety-**

- This is established in childhood through a consistent message that there is nothing that child can do that will lead to loss of love



- After middle adolescence, conflict begins to decline through late adolescence.
- Although perhaps not as dependent on their parents as they were earlier in life, older adolescents still see their parents as their primary sources of support and advice regarding important aspects of their lives such as schooling and future employment.
- Disruptions during early to middle adolescence as the beginning of a transformation of parent—child relationships that is necessary for healthy adolescent development. Together, modest amounts of conflict and emotional distancing help to transform parent—child relationships from the parent-dominated quality of childhood to a more egalitarian and interdependent quality of adulthood.

# Family Discussions



- **Family dinner literature**
- **Most effective sharing is when parents discuss their own lives and engage in family discussions marked by respect for the child's views**
  - reasoning as opposed to emotionalism
  - teaching the child to understand the consequences of their actions
  - encouragement of the child's participation in family discussions in a manner which elicits and re-presents the reasoning of others

# Appropriate Monitoring

## Appropriate to require adolescents:

- To describe where they intend to go and with whom
- To get permission before going out, both on school nights and on weekends

## Parents might also attend to and track their children's whereabouts and activities by regularly asking them about their school and leisure-time experiences:

- Keeping in touch with the parents of their children's friends so that they can be used as a source of information
- Asking their children's friends and how they think and feel about various issues in order to understand what influences their children are encountering.



wiseGEEK

# Planned Discussions



- **Strike when the iron is cold**
- **Spontaneous discussion when adolescent not motivated to talk is invariably counterproductive**
- **Think how receptive you would be if interrupted with unpleasant discussion**
- **Instead:**
  - Set aside a time designated for a planned conversation.
  - Say briefly and calmly what you want to discuss
  - E.g. “I’m concerned about your grade in biology. When would be a good time for the two of us to talk this over? It won’t take very long.”



# NAGGING

**Reminders re: studying, cleaning room etc.. almost invariably do not work**

- Tends to be spontaneous, poorly thought out
- Repetition does not make a request sink in
- “Parent-deafness”

**Antidote is make sure that this is a worthy battle ground, and set up a later time for a planned discussion**



**Lectures sharing insights or lessons from your life will almost never lead to child saying “I haven’t thought of that, I’ll change my ways.”**

- Can’t save adolescent from making mistakes you made as teenager.
- Before such a discussion ask yourself how many times you have said same thing before, and cue in to your adolescent’s non-verbal signs of receptivity.



# IMPROVING RELATIONSHIP WITH ADOLESCENT

## ACTIVE LISTENING

- Reflecting feelings, calm questioning, paraphrasing

## TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF

- “I also hated biology”; story from work

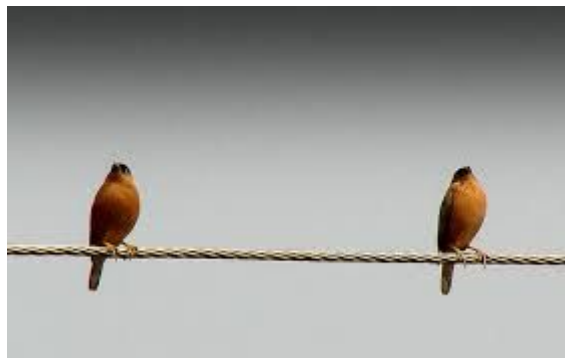
## SHARED FUN

- One on one, consistently, don't bring up problems



# CHOOSE YOUR BATTLEGROUND: WHEN IT IS SAFE TO NOT GET ACTIVELY INVOLVED

1. **The better the adolescent is doing academically and socially** the safer it is to inhabit the role of “consultant” as opposed to manager.
2. **If your relationship with each other is generally good** micromanaging is counterproductive.
3. **Who owns the problem? If answer is “child”** than parent can safely stay out and let logical consequences take over.



# Effective Consequences

**When formal consequences are necessary  
keep in mind that the most effective  
consequences are:**

- Logical
- Unemotional
- Brief



# Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Parent Connection Sessions

3/15/16	<b>For Teachers and Parents</b>  How to Help Your Child or Student with Attention Struggles – Claire Wurtzel
4/5/16	<b>For Teachers and Parents</b>  Dyslexia 101: Clarifying the Facts and Dispelling the Myths - Karen Kruger

***For more information visit: [www.hiddensparks.org](http://www.hiddensparks.org)***

**If you are interested in bringing Hidden Sparks  
to your school or city, please contact us at:**

**[212-767-7707](tel:212-767-7707) or [sara@hiddensparks.org](mailto:sara@hiddensparks.org)**

# Contacting Hidden Sparks

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