

Do Your Brainwork



Improving the odds for teens' mental health

When you think of teens, do you see them acting without thinking? Teens do make choices, solve problems and act differently than adults. There is a good reason: your teen's brain. Studies show that the part of the brain that controls thinking and impulses is still changing and maturing well into adulthood.

Other big changes in the brain during the teen years include a rapid gain in the links between cells and changes in brain pathways. All these things bring about changes in how teens think and act.

As a result of these brain changes teens may:

- Act without thinking or join in unsafe actions
- Misread emotions or social cues
- Get into accidents
- Get involved in fights

While it is normal for all teens to go through brain changes, these may be warning signs that your child is having an emotional problem:

- Not able to calm down
- Poor grades
- Trouble focusing
- Sadness that lasts
- Lack of motivation
- Weight loss or gain
- Tiredness or sleep problems
- Low self-esteem
- Unlawful actions

When you learn teens' brain differences, you can help pave the way toward better emotional health.



BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois



Facing anger during the teen years together

When kids enter the teen scene, it brings strong mental and physical changes and special challenges to emotional health and well-being. It also brings special challenges to parents.

Loving families can help protect teens against acting violently, abusing drugs or alcohol, or taking other unsafe actions. But even in the most loving homes, the teen years can lead to anger. The best way to deal with anger is to step back, calm down and try to deal with problems in a more thoughtful way.

Here are some tips to help you calm down and be a good role model for your teen:

- Pick your battles.
- Take a deep breath; count to 10.
- Think before you speak.
- Go for a walk.
- Talk to yourself first. Remind yourself to calm down.
- Reframe the problem. Focus on what might really be going on.
- Use humor, but without sarcasm.

Your teen is facing one of the most demanding stages of his or her life. Help make the teenage years less stressful by providing a caring and positive home, talking to your teen, being responsible for your own actions, and being a role model.

If anger becomes a problem for someone in the family, or if you think your family is at a crisis point, seek help from a mental health professional.