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Five to Thrive: Hormones, Brains & Patience

Your beliefs about teen hormones and brain develop might be all wrong. Aided by new technology, scientists recently reversed much of what we thought we knew about how and when our brains develop. The impressive capabilities of our seniors and their exterior appearances of maturity disguise a brain that has another region to construct.

In this third installment of Five to Thrive, we will look at some of those discoveries about **Adolescent Development** and how your family can use them. If you missed our first three parts, find them on our website by clicking the following titles: [Resilience](#), [Concrete Support](#), and [Social Connections](#).

Development Myths

Fixed Abilities: We now know that structural development in the teen brain rivals the infant and toddler years for the pace and volume of change. Those changes open new opportunities for teens to create neural pathways to new abilities—both emotional and cognitive. But, teens need specific types of learning opportunities coupled with intentional guidance from supportive adults to build a full complement of thinking and feeling skills.

Fully Baked: Human brains do not complete physical development until our mid to late 20s. In particular, the frontal cortex—where executive decision making happens, such as planning for the future, goal setting, balancing risk and reward, and controlling impulses—is the last to come on line. So, expect students to need gradually diminishing amounts of guidance and support until beyond college graduation.

They Should Know Better: How often has teen behavior left you with the question, “What were you thinking?” It turns out that they weren’t thinking. Well into adolescence, the brain develops in regions. The limbic system, which controls emotions, develops through the mid-teens. The complex thinking in the frontal cortex happens after that and through our 20s. These stages leave students to rely on the emotional responses to guide their actions. So yes, fear, anger, pleasure, and impatience, not logic, most influence your teen.

Not Just Hormones: We know that hormones that activate various reproductive functions can create Jekyll-and-Hyde-type behavior. Teens morph from our little darlings to angry, sullen, and often hurtful strangers and then back again in the time span of a TV sitcom. Their behavior surprises them as much as it does you.

It turns out that brain chemicals flood their systems in massive doses that occur only in teens. Among others, Dopamine (our body’s internal pleasure chemical) makes fun and risky behaviors irresistible to a teen. The trick is to provide positive risks; a lead in the musical, asking that

classmate for a date, leading a fashion trend, community service that requires adult-like responsibility, travel, and adventure all can substitute for behaviors that could do real harm.

Unfortunately, locking our students safely away until their full brain comes on line can't work. During these critical years of brain development, your student needs access to trusted, supportive, and informed adults. And not just you; they need your help to identify other adults on whom they can rely. Plus, they need experiences to lay down the neural pathways that will allow them to make sound decisions, plan for their futures, and balance risk and reward. Repeating experiences hardens those connections and makes them more readily available. Also through these opportunities, teens add to their ability to manage their emotions.

Fear not; it is the boundaries you set that keep them from doing real harm with an emotional choice. For best results, those rules need to adjust frequently. As their experiences and the coaching of caring adults build those neural pathways, teens need increasing autonomy. Without carrying gradually more of the burden of responsibility, they can't build all the neural pathways of a fully-capable adult brain. Teens need their trusted adults to make judgments about safe boundaries given the decision-making abilities the student has demonstrated.

Teens need positive risks and learning experiences. Their developing skills for situational analysis also need for you to ask leading questions and occasionally coach. If you help them recognize the opportunities to learn and improve their skills, their learning becomes a conscious endeavor. They will learn more quickly to regulate their emotions and perform those executive function cognitive skills, such as planning ahead and assessing consequences. Share the details of your analysis by asking questions: "What might you..." and "How could you..." make great starts.

Evidence-backed research lists the following experiences and masteries that require adult coaching and information:

- Teens need support to understand, accept, and manage the metamorphosis a teen body and brain undergoes. First sidestepping Mr. Hyde and then welcoming Dr. Jekyll back with acceptance and forgiveness for their rudeness helps a teen learn to take a few moments alone when hormones make them feel so nasty and to readily apologize when their chemistry occasionally gets the better of them.
- Ultimately, only your teen can make decisions about sexual behavior that aligns with the value system you have taught and that keeps them safe. You can help them learn to navigate conversations on a sensitive topic. They will need those skills for conversations in their relationships if they are to stay true to their values.
- In today's world, they need help learning to keep their bodies healthy with exercise, nutrition, and rest. American teens struggle with wellness and will need your problem-solving skills to build good habits.
- Your experience and connections can help organize those positive-risk-taking experiences that build their resilience and decision-making skills.

- To create and sustain healthy relationships with peers, family, and community, teens will need to resolve conflicts, stand-up to unfairness, and learn to apologize and to forgive with sincerity. They have learned much of this from your examples, but teen relationships become more complicated in part because of teens' limited skills and because of the development challenges we discussed above.
- As those who know your teen and those who can connect them with others who share their backgrounds and interests, parents can help teens build a personally satisfying, multifaceted identity that belongs to them at the same time it helps them to belong.
- Caring adults can help teens identify their personal passions and strengths, develop those, and establish realistic goals regarding them. Use your fully developed frontal cortex skills to help them to find their potential and to set high expectations and a career plan. For other interests, help them understand the value of engaging hobbies that offer relaxation and opportunities to make friends.
- Stress comes with modern life, but its potential for harm requires that teens develop coping skills. If yours need polish, would learning together offer an option?
- Regardless of your faith, science tells us that teens should explore spirituality. A belief that they belong to something greater than themselves—even if it is the community of humankind—protects teens from many challenges to their well-being.
- And in your spare moments, everyone must acquire essential life skills, such as driving, financial management, cooking, etc.

Next week we will tackle our last installment—details of the seven cognitive (thinking) abilities and nine emotional competencies that students need to enjoy the thriving, productive lives that parents dream of for their offspring.

Build Resilience in a Toolbox Workshop

Families need opportunities to fill their toolboxes with the resources that we have discussed in our **Five to Thrive** series. Mark your calendars for the evening of Wednesday, 11/29. **Learn concepts, skills, and activities that Build Resilience in Your Teen** in this 90-minute active workshop. All the events in this series will offer concrete skills—and opportunities to practice them—that you can implement immediately.

We want our Knights thriving while they master their academics. I hope you will partner with us. Nothing can substitute for a community of caring adults in building an environment where students thrive and grow into resilient, resourceful adults.

Knights Running to State

Two members of our Cross Country team qualified for state competition. Juniors Alyssa Bienfang and Max Hanley will compete at state. A third runner, second alternate, is freshmen Kylee Choi.

Who Pays for Public School Education in Bellevue?

Learn the ins and outs of funding education in Bellevue Schools from Melissa deVita, Deputy Superintendent, Financial Services & Operations. She will detail how state and local taxes, such as levies and bonds, fund public education. Other pieces of the funding puzzle include Bellevue Schools Foundation and Bellevue's PTAs. Those roles will change in light of recent legislative actions.

[Please register here.](#) Four free sessions:

- Monday, 11/13, Sammamish High School, 7 PM
- Tuesday, 11/14, WISC Rainier Room, 12-1 PM (includes a light lunch provided by Newport Knives Culinary students)
- Thursday, 11/16, Bellevue High School, 6:30 PM
- Monday 11/20, Newport High School, 7 PM.

Students Prepare to Teach

Students in our Teaching Academy program explore the educational system from teaching to administration. In addition to instruction and seminars at the high school, students will intern with a mentor teacher at a preschool, elementary, middle, or high school of their choice.

Throughout the year, students participate in the inner-workings of the classroom, school, and district. They will gain knowledge and experience in teamwork, time management, communication, leadership, and current educational issues. This course is priceless for students interested in a career in education.

Nanotechnology Knights Reach Out to Young Girls

Kayla Shigaya, Sierra Peter-Contesse, and Alissa Serezo packed up their car with different gadgets and samples. They took it upon themselves to go to the University of Washington (UW) Saturday event, "Introduce a Girl to Nano."

They were the only high school group that had a booth; everyone else presenting were college and graduate students from UW. They went to inspire young impressionable minds of the possible careers a girl can pursue in science. Kayla, Sierra, and Alissa said that as the girls came through viewing the different booths, many were excited and just loved it.

Interpreter Training

Do you know someone interested in becoming an interpreter for the district? Please invite them.

To become a district interpreter, you must attend a training session. The training is scheduled for Monday, 12/4, 8:30 AM-3:30 PM at ESC (12111 NE 1st St, Bellevue 98005). Interpreters are paid for their service, but the training time is not paid. Space is limited and the registration deadline is Nov.

17. To register, [click here](#).

We are especially in need of more Albanian, Cambodian, Chinese, Indian languages and dialects, Korean, Punjabi and Vietnamese interpreters.

To learn more about the training session or becoming a district interpreter, contact the district Communications Office at 456-4000.

Entertainment Tonight

Tonight is Newport Idol 2017. Program starts @ 7 PM and features the entertaining and musical talents of our students in the NHS Theater. More fun, and this time with more music.

Tickets:

- \$10 for adults/general admission,
- \$5 Newport Students with ASB Card, and
- \$8 Students without ASB.

Purchase tickets at the door, on the [Voices of Newport website](#), or during both lunches through today, Friday. ALL ticket sales will go to Voices of Newport Choir Booster Club to help support our wonderful choir program.

How to Report a Safety Concern

Bullying and safety concerns always can be reported to any staff member at our school. The Bellevue School District also uses an anonymous reporting tool called SafeSchools Alert. Anyone can make a verbal or written report of harassment, intimidation or bullying, or contact a school administrator or any staff member through SafeSchools.

Information on how to submit a report via any of these methods is available on the district website at www.bsd405.org/help/report.

Schedule Changes for Veteran's Day Week

With the no-school days coming up, along with an assembly, we need to change up the schedule. Here are the highlights:

- Monday, 11/6, we will run a regular schedule with periods 1-7.
- Tuesday, 11/7, we will run a BLOCK SCHEDULE with periods 1,3,5,7 (typical Thursday Schedule)
- Wednesday, 11/8, we will run a BLOCK SCHEDULE with periods 2,4,6 (regular Wednesday) adjusted to accommodate a required Veterans Day Assembly.

The day will start at 8:30 AM and end at 1:25. You can download a detailed schedule by [clicking here](#).

Winter Sports Registration and Physicals

Registration for Winter Sports on FamilyID is live until Friday, 11/10, at 4 PM. If your student wants to participate in a winter sport, they must have a current physical on file with Mrs. Jones, ASB Secretary. Students also must have no outstanding fines and will need to register on www.FamilyID.com.

Basketball, wrestling, girls' gymnastics, and boys' swim and dive are our winter sports offered. The first day of gymnastics will be Monday, 11/6, all other winter sports will begin Monday, 11/13.

PTSA Meets 11/15

The next PTSA Membership Meeting is Wednesday, 11/15, at 7 PM in the NHS Library. Follow-up on Grants and Ski Swap tops the agenda.

Only One Friday Until the 32nd Annual SKI SWAP

Shop the Swap:

- Friday, 11/10, noon to 9 PM (\$10 early entry fee for 12 noon admission; General Admission begins at 1 pm)
- Saturday, 11/11, 9 AM to 5 PM

New & Used Consigned Gear

- Volunteer [here](#) for one of the four days. Setup begins Thursday and teardown happens Sunday. Sales days are in between. Students can earn community service hours for helping their PTSA raise funds for our school.
- Donate Food to feed the wonderful student and parent volunteers [here](#).
- Register your gear to consign [here](#).

The Newport Ski Swap sells downhill and X-C skis, snowboards, boots, bindings, poles, jackets, pants, helmets, hats, goggles, gloves, socks, under layers, and more.

Hundreds of individuals and seven snow sport shops consign about 10,000 new and used items. We organize the sale throughout our two large gyms, 17,000 sq feet. Last year, sales topped \$500,000.

The event is not actually a "swap" but rather a [consignment sale](#). The Newport High School PTSA uses the profits to support unfunded educational needs.

Admissions Essay Support at Newport

College Corp volunteers are here every Tuesday and Thursday after school in the library to help seniors with essays. They help students prepare for the college application, essay, etc. Check in with Ms. Lopez-Kopp in our library early this week.

Also, encourage your students to ask their Senior English teacher for feedback on their essay during tutorial.

Get Them Going

Winter Sports Conditioning is Here! The Newport Girls Basketball coaching staff is proud to announce the start of a winter sports conditioning program. The sessions will run every Tue/Thu from 5:30 to 6:30 PM. All Newport High School students are eligible. Activities will vary among track work, hills, stairs, plyometrics and more! The program will help any winter-sport participants prepare for their upcoming season. Open gym will follow each workout from 6:30 to 7:30 PM.

Reflections

Newport participates in the PTA Reflections Competition for high school students. Calling all writers, artists, photographers, film producers, composers and choreographers: This years theme is Within Reach.

Read the rules [here](#). Newport High PTSA will collect submissions on November 27th. The Reflections form on newportptsa.org site offers further instructions. Email lisa.shank@newportptsa.org with questions.

Dates to Remember:

- Tryout and Practice for Gymnastics: Monday, November 6th
- Veteran's Day Assembly, 11/8
- No Students: Thursday, 11/9
- No Students/Veteran's Day Holiday: Friday, 11/10
- Tryout and Practice for Girls and Boys Basketball, Boys Swim & Dive, Girls and Boys Wrestling: Monday, 11/13
- No School/Thanksgiving Break: Thursday & Friday, 11/23 & 11/24
- Winterfest Week: Monday, 12/11 to Friday, 12/15
- Semester Finals: 1/24/18 to 1/26/18
- End of First Semester: 1/26/18

Useful Links:

[Daily Bulletin](#)

[Newport Website](#)

[PTSA Website](#)

[Bell Schedule](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Counseling Assignments](#)

[Newport Television](#)

[Naviance](#) for college admissions planning and information

[Counseling Center](#)

[Community Service](#) for volunteer listings

[Athletics](#)

[Club Directory](#)

Newport Athletic Hotline at [425.456.7522](tel:425.456.7522) for daily updates