

# Alcohol & Drugs And Adolescent Brain Development

## Part one in a three-part series

BY MANHASSET PRESS STAFF

MANHASSET@ANTONMEDIAGROUP.COM

As part of its Talk. They Hear You. Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign, Manhasset CASA is proud to feature the work of the Partnership for Drug Free Kids. This week's article focuses on adolescent brain development and why teens act the way they do.

Have you ever looked at your teenager and wondered: "Why does my teen do that?" From mood swings to risk-taking, "normal teenage behavior" can appear to be anything but normal to parents and other bystanders. However, new research reveals that patterns of brain development during these formative years play a significant role in shaping your teen's personality and actions.

Scientists are beginning to learn that it takes a brain about 25 years to fully develop, and that a huge burst of development happens during adolescence. That burst can explain a lot of unpredictable—and sometimes risky—teen behavior. Scientists now know that the brain is getting reorganized in a big way during the

teenage years. This is a time of huge opportunities—and risks.

Everyone knows the importance of guiding and nurturing toddlers, whose brains are developing at warp speed. But what about the development of the teen brain? We're now learning that adolescents go through a similar wave of major development. From ages 13 to about age 25, a pruning and strengthening process is happening in their brains. During that time, the brain cells and neural connections that get used the least get pruned away and die off; those that get used the most get stronger.

This new knowledge about adolescent brain development explains why it's so important for parents to encourage teens to have healthy activities. For example, the more time your teen spends learning music, the stronger those brain connections get. The same is true of the connections they use for playing video games, mastering a sport or watching TV.

Ironically, this period—when the brain is rapidly changing and most vulnerable to outside influences—is when teens are most likely to experiment with drugs and

alcohol. Why? One reason may be because the brain region that's responsible for making complex judgments (the prefrontal cortex) isn't fully mature, and therefore is prone to being overpowered by the emotional or motivational regions that are more mature. Scientists believe this aspect of teenage brain development explains why young people sometimes use poor judgment and don't have good impulse control.

Because of the huge changes happening in the teenage brain, it's possible that a decision your teen makes now may affect her/him for life. (Brain scans, for instance, have linked alcohol abuse with decreased memory functioning.) Just sharing that fact with your teen may help her/him to stop and think before he/she takes any chances, and even inspire her/him to make more healthy choices.

Manhasset CASA's Talk. They Hear You. Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign encourages parents to talk with their t(w)eens about the dangers

of underage drinking including alcohol's impact on the adolescent brain. Research continues to show that parents remain the #1 influence in their children's life, especially when it comes to underage drinking. For more information about CASA's Talk. They Hear You. campaign, go to [www.manhassetcasa.org](http://www.manhassetcasa.org) or [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org).



Daniel  
Gale

Sotheby's  
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

[danielgale.com](http://danielgale.com)

### OPEN HOUSE



Sat. 5/28th & Sun. 5/29th 1:30 – 3:30 pm  
82 Bogart Ave., Port Washington, NY

Spectacular 4-bedroom, 3.5 bath custom built Colonial with living room, formal dining room, oversized family room with stone fireplace, heated floors, and sliding glass doors leading out to private and tranquil back yard. Large covered patio, waterfall, and pond. Finished basement with billiard room, playroom, office, full bath, and laundry. New architectural roof, Andersen windows, CAC, sprinklers. Walk to schools, town and train. SD #4. \$1,399,000.



**Maryann Ressa**

Real Estate Salesperson

Port Washington Office

350 Main Street, Port Washington, NY

516.883.2900 ext.304, c.516.996.3740

[maryannressa@danielgale.com](mailto:maryannressa@danielgale.com)

Each office is independently owned and operated. We are pledged to provide equal opportunity for housing to any prospective customer or client, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin.