

Dear Parents: Something you should know about The Teenage Brain

Have you ever witnessed your child making a bad decision? Certainly every parent could answer yes to this question. *How did you respond?* Answers to this question are more likely to vary. *Did you take away all their freedom or help them learn from their mistake?* Depending on your answer, you may be training your child for greatness or mediocrity. Because research on the teens brains shows that there brains are designed to help them gain independence, parents should allow their children more freedom to explore and learn from their mistakes.

First of all, parents, take note: Teens are wired to explore the world around them and take risks in order to gain independence. Although some of their choices may be dangerous, they are learning vital skills in order to step out and live on their own. Do you really want your 35 year old son living in your basement? If not, listen to this research.

According to *'The Teenage Brain'* by Amanda Leigh Mascarelli, "Researchers believe the teen brain evolved to respond to rewards so teens would leave the protection of their parents." In other words, when your child is allowed freedom, it triggers reward centers in the brain, and he or she will like the feeling associated with that freedom. The reward center of the brain will actually respond and remember that feeling. Consequently, they are more likely to take calculated risks in the future in order to trigger that reward in the brain. This becomes a cycle that eventually leads to them leaving your house as an adult.

Although some parents feel like they have to hover over their children and protect them from all the dangers in the world, they are actually doing more harm for their child than good. By not allowing them a chance to explore, by driving themselves to school, or going out with their friends, or joining a new sport, they are changing their children's brains. By not allowing them to feel the sensations associated with the reward center, they are training their children NOT to take risks. Do you think Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, and Bill Gates took risks. What about Steve Jobs? What about Ghandi? Risks are an essential component on the path to greatness.