

Upper School Coffee Morning and Workshop

Living and Learning with the Adolescent Brain
Thursday, April 18th

Ms Pat Long, Dr Jen Widi, Vicky Shen

Before we start...

This is a chance to:

- learn about the processes of adolescence
- share experiences and concerns
- see that we are not alone
- find ways to feel in control of what CAN be controlled
- learn what to say when words fail us
- laugh a little!

This is not a chance to:

- bad-mouth or 'get even' with our children (or anyone else's!)
- share other people's stories
- get all the answers

Activity: Let's be honest...

When I was a child...

Kevin Becomes a Teenager

Warm up - Two cards

Card 1:

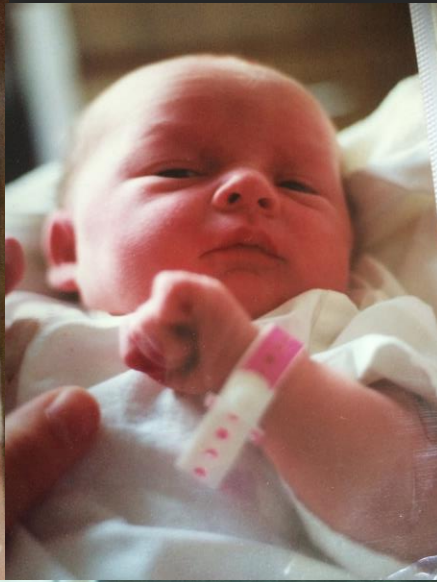
A question (or two) that you hope will be answered in today's workshop.

Card 2:

EITHER the first line of a story about an event or issue from your OWN adolescence, AND your name. (We will ask you to share this story at some point during the morning.)

OR the first line of a story about an event or issue that you have had to deal with, with your own CHILD. (For the brave! We may ask you to share this story at some point during the morning.)

What is happening to my baby???

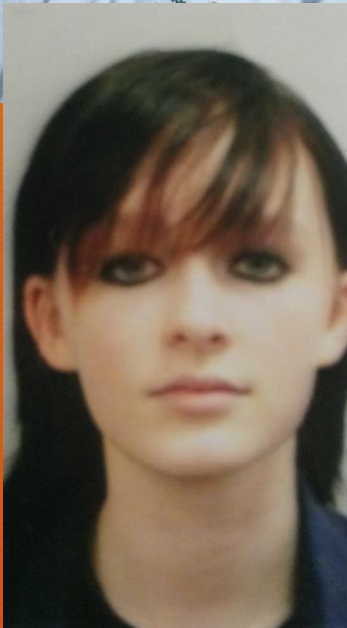
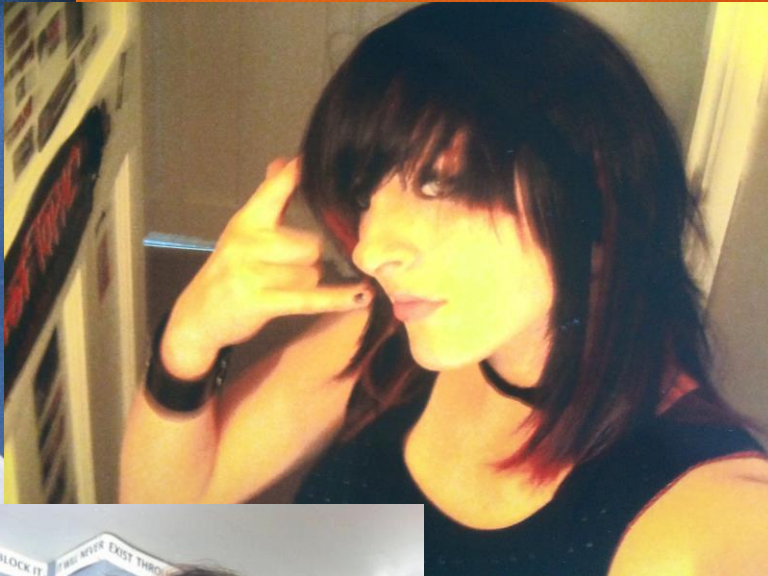


The baby becomes an adult...





When suddenly...



Puberty- physical changes

Girls- USUALLY around 10-11

(CAN start as early as 8)

- Breasts increase in size
- Growth spurt
- Change in shape
- Genital changes
- Hair
- Discharge
- Periods

Boys- USUALLY around 11-13

(CAN start as early as 9)

- Genital changes
- Hair
- Growth spurt
- More hair
- Erections/sperm production
- Voice change

+ Bones, organs,
gravity, strength,
weight, sleep,
strength, sweat, hair,
skin

Puberty can last from 18 months to 5 years- it is all normal!

The most
significant brain
development
since early
childhood

1. 'Blooming and pruning':

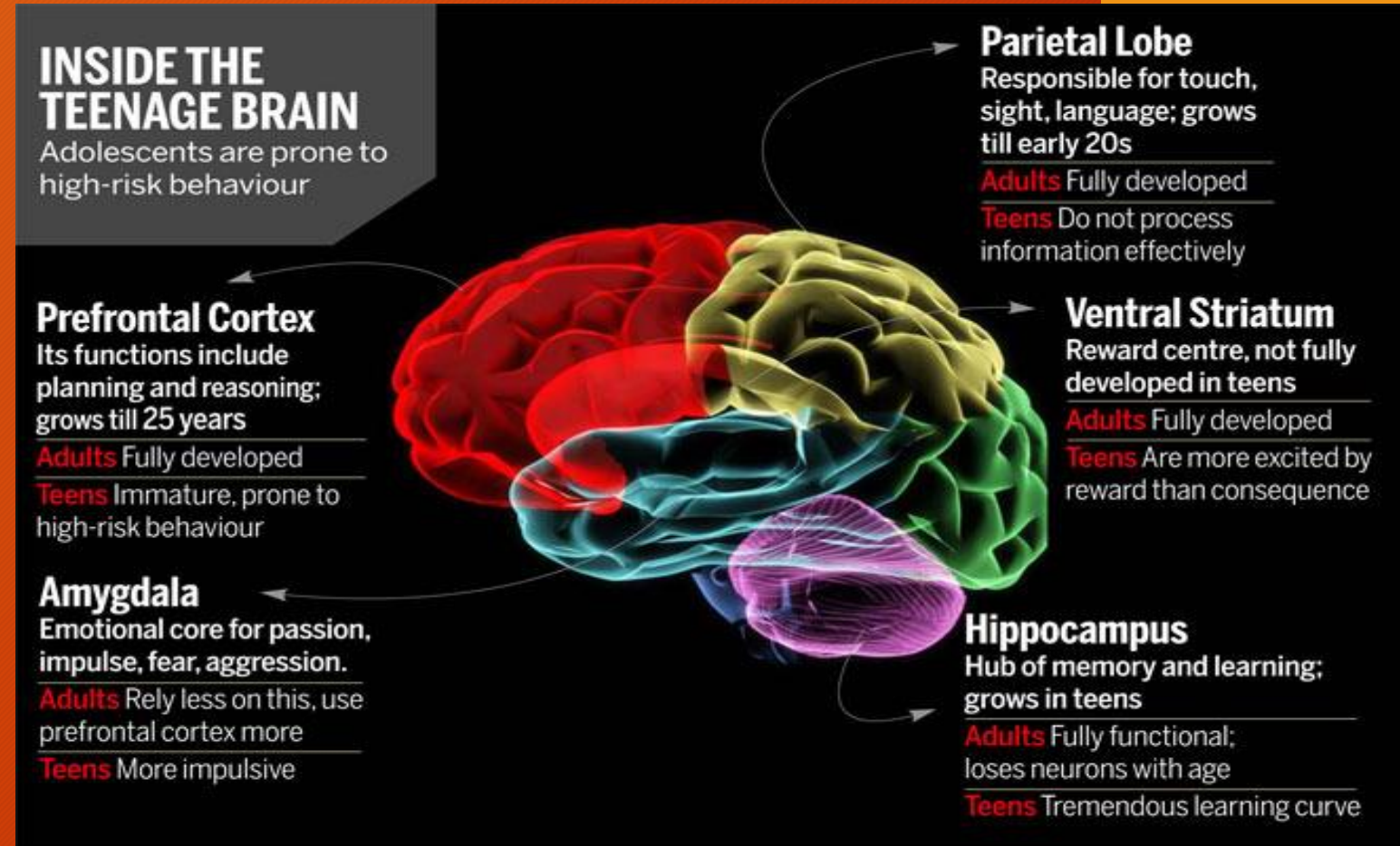
"the formation of neural pathways that are formed and frequently used during adolescence will be strengthened and ingrained while those that are rarely exercised or ignored will be pruned away and lost...habits, values and dispositions developed during adolescence usually follow an individual into adulthood."

Coming of Age: The
Education & Development of Young Adolescents

Kenneth Brighton

2. Prefrontal Cortex development

The part of the brain that controls organisational skills, impulse control, mood modulation, situational awareness and cause/effect thinking is struggling to keep up- and it becomes more obvious!

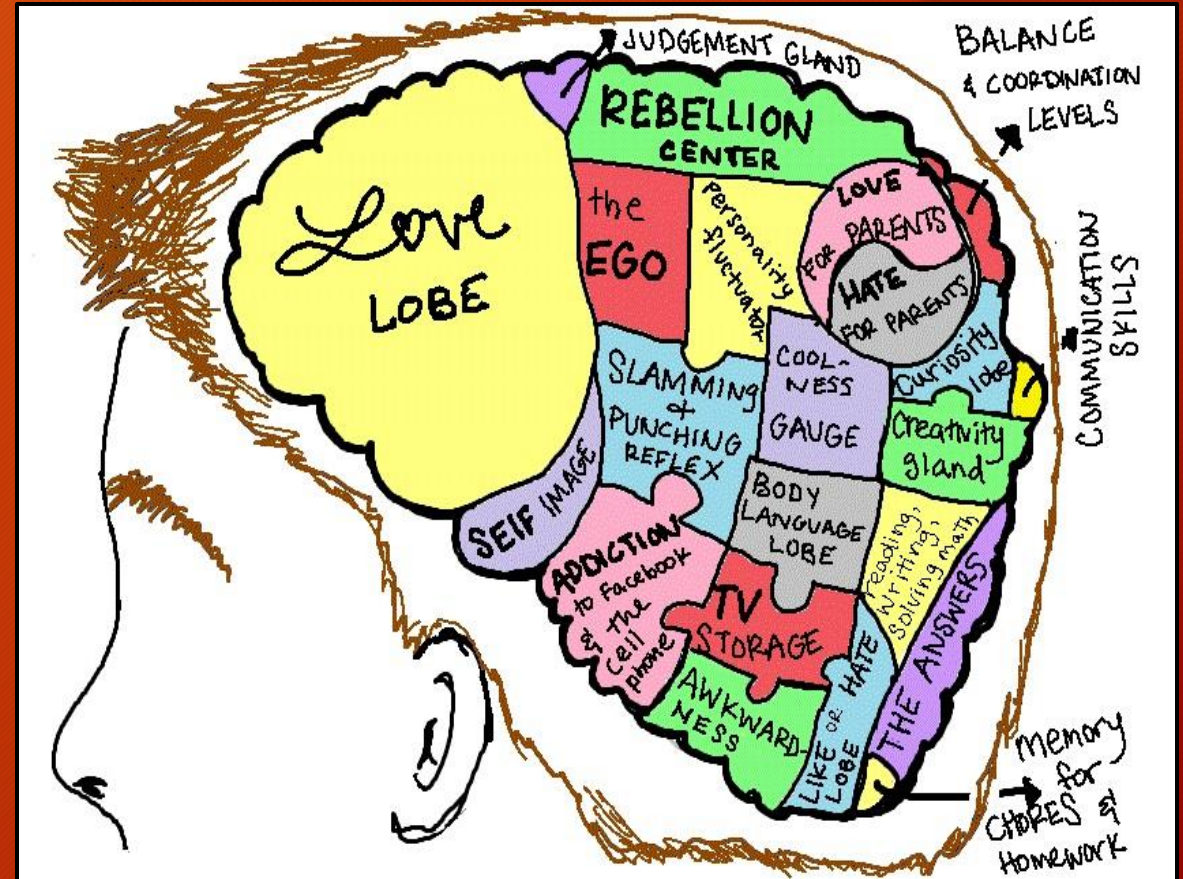


3. Amygdala processing

The adolescent processes impulses directly through part of the brain that controls emotion, including anger, excitement and aggression. Adult brains can bypass the amygdala through alternative pathways, helping them reason through potentially awkward situations.

What this means:

- * They can't help what is happening to them.
- * They probably need help finding a path through it.



What is “normal” difficult behavior?

“Normal” Difficult Behavior:

- Moodiness
- Less affection shown to parents
- Influence by peers
- Preoccupation with sex
- Masturbation
- Very occasional experimentation with cigarettes or alcohol
- Extreme self-involvement
- Self- consciousness
- Involvement with cliques

Cries for Help:

- Regular use of alcohol and/or other drugs
- Sexual promiscuity
- Lying or stealing
- Destructive or delinquent behavior
- Poor school behavior
- Persistent negative attitude
- Frequent temper outbursts
- Extreme fear of leaving home
- Self- Mutilation
- Suicidal ideas or suicide attempt

Activity: a day in the life of...

- With your table, create a schedule for the typical day in the life of a child of your assigned age/grade level. Start with waking up, and end with going to sleep.



Middle Schoolers- Key Features:

Grade 6-ISH

- Organisational meltdown
- Gender quandry
- Disillusionment
- Risk-taking
- Friendship drama (1)
- Confusion
- Stress
- Hygiene
- Black-and-white reasoning

Grade 7-or-so

- Awkwardness
- Physical self-consciousness
- Aggression (boys)
- Mood swings (girls)
- Other adults
- Friendship drama (2)
- Self-absorption
- Absolutism
- Grade slump

Continued...

Grade 8-esque

- Sleep
- Appearance and identity
- Pushing boundaries, asserting independence
- Opposite sex
- “Causes”
- Friendship drama (3)
- ‘Shades of grey’
- Solitude
- Childishness, the ‘personal fable’

Grades 9-10

- More assurance
 - Decision-making and planning
 - Reflectiveness and balance
 - Delayed gratification and compromise
 - Self- management (good or bad)
 - Other’s perceptions
-

Grades 11-12

- Lack of consultation
- Change of direction
- Adult interactions
- Nostalgia

How to help (1):

Physically:

- SLEEP **
- Healthy eating habits
- Reasonable demands on time and clear expectations.
- Activity and experimentation
- Honest and accurate information about sex, without judgement

Socially:

- Opportunities: clubs, exchanges, volunteering, travel, etc
- *Social media/gaming boundaries ***
- New hobbies- art, sport, culture...
- New freedoms and responsibilities- be ready to take some time to get it right



How to help (2)

Emotionally:

- Develop routines where the child can feel safe approaching you
- Don't criticize or compare teens to others
- Be available for displays of affection, but don't demand them
- Be understanding about the need for space and privacy
- Choose your battles wisely
- Don't take it personally
- Don't ignore serious cries for help

You are building a relationship with the adult your child is becoming. It's scary for you both!



How to help (3)

School:

Managebac- be informed

Email- communicate, and assume goodwill

Organisation- nudge in the right direction

Homework- create space that allows you to supervise without stifling

Balance- breaks and exercise help with productivity

Perspective- help see the big picture

Technology- boundaries!

The stressed child:

Stress impacts everyone- it is part of life. There are patterns in certain high-achieving students:

- ❖ they can begin to focus so much on school work that other parts of their lives begin to suffer
- ❖ negative emotions make the stress much harder to deal with, especially sadness or anger.

Students experiencing these negative emotions AND stress frequently displayed symptoms of clinical depression.

According to research, the students who suffer the most and struggle to cope often belong to one of two types of families:

- ❖ the parents who over-pressure the student, who drive them to get top results and join all the activities, and who express disappointment personally when the child makes mistakes. These students become stressed because they feel that they MUST do well.*
- ❖ the parents who over-praise the child with unrealistic and over-enthusiastic feedback- 'You are smart/talented/the best/wonderful'. When this child arrives at school, they realise that they are not the best at everything, and feel like failures- that they CAN'T do well.*

Social media makes stress worse, because students compare themselves to others online. Those who post details of their accomplishments online usually focus on good things, and seldom post negative images/grade results, so students who spend lots of time engaging in social media can feel like they don't measure up.

What helps the stressed student:

1. A sense of control

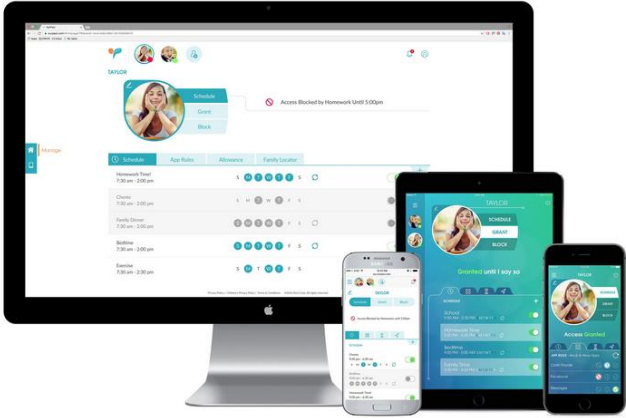
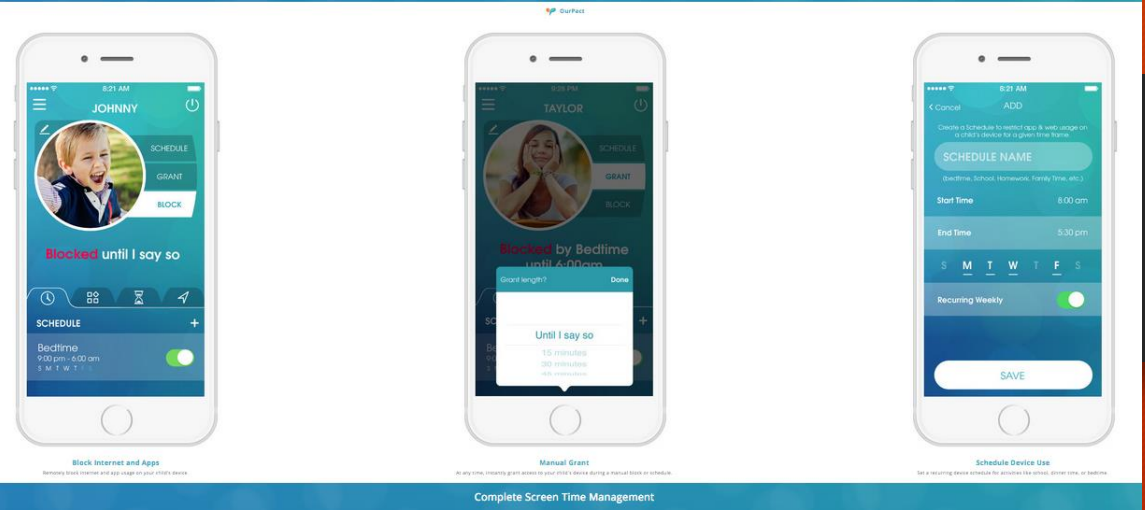
If the student is able to feel like they have control over some elements of their lives/ their schooling/ their workload/decisions that impact them, they are better able to cope with stress and avoid depression. Some kind of control is vital. A student who feels like they have no control will 'solve' their problems by avoidance, procrastination, withdrawal, overwork, etc.

2. Positive relationships with at least one adult. (best if a parent, but an adult at school will do) The relationship cannot be forced, and the student will likely 'choose' who it will be with- someone who encourages and supports them, and is genuinely interested in them, their lives, and how they feel.

A sentence starter for parents who are trying to strike the right balance:

- *'I don't know whether you will _____ (get into the best school/attain straight A's/make the team, etc) but I believe you can grow and learn and find the way through this.'*

Our Pact:



Children & Teens Spend More Than 7 Hours A Day On Screens

OurPact Everywhere

OurPact gives you the power to block internet and apps across any network, inside and outside of the home. Whether you're looking for iOS or Android parental controls, OurPact is trusted by families worldwide.



Block Apps
OurPact gives parents the ability to block apps, including social media and games.



iPhone Parental Controls
Access the OurPact Family Dashboard at any time using the free OurPact mobile app.



App Rules
App Rules allows parents to block distracting apps, while leaving educational apps for learning.



Block Internet
Along with blocking apps, OurPact blocks internet browsers like Safari and Chrome.



iPad Parental Controls
OurPact's parental control app can be accessed from any shared family iPad or tablet.



Block Texting
Create schedules and block texting on your child's iOS and Android devices using OurPact.



Schedule Screen Time
Utilize the ability to block internet and apps, and schedule screen time throughout the day.



Android Parental Controls
Parents can log in to the OurPact Web App to manage any Android smartphone or tablet.



Screen Time Allowance
Set daily screen time limits to ensure healthy device habits.



How to cope 1:

Start by asking yourself:
“What are my priorities?”

Be prepared!

- Talk to your children about the changes that they will experience during this time.
- Create an atmosphere of respect, trust and honesty.

Be empathetic!

- You were once an adolescent. Put yourself in your child's place.
- Remember the patience that helped you when they were a newborn- they need the same levels of patience now.

How to cope 2:

Be the adult!

- Maintain expectations for your teen. Don't write off negative behavior with "He's just a teen".
- Know your teen's friends and keep track of their activities. Check up on them.
- Know the warning signs when risky behavior becomes dangerous behavior.
- Set boundaries and make rules that are appropriate.
- Take everything they say with a grain of salt


When things reach crisis: Escalation/Adrenaline Curve



- In an adult it takes 90 minutes for adrenalin to leave the bloodstream
- Any attempt to discuss the incident or problem could potentially lead to reescalation
- Therefore, giving consequences and discussion should happen much later
- De-escalation goals are key

Listening to Teens

Let them speak, and reflect back. Try to understand what they are saying. Ask open questions, and wait for them to ask your opinion after these open questions.

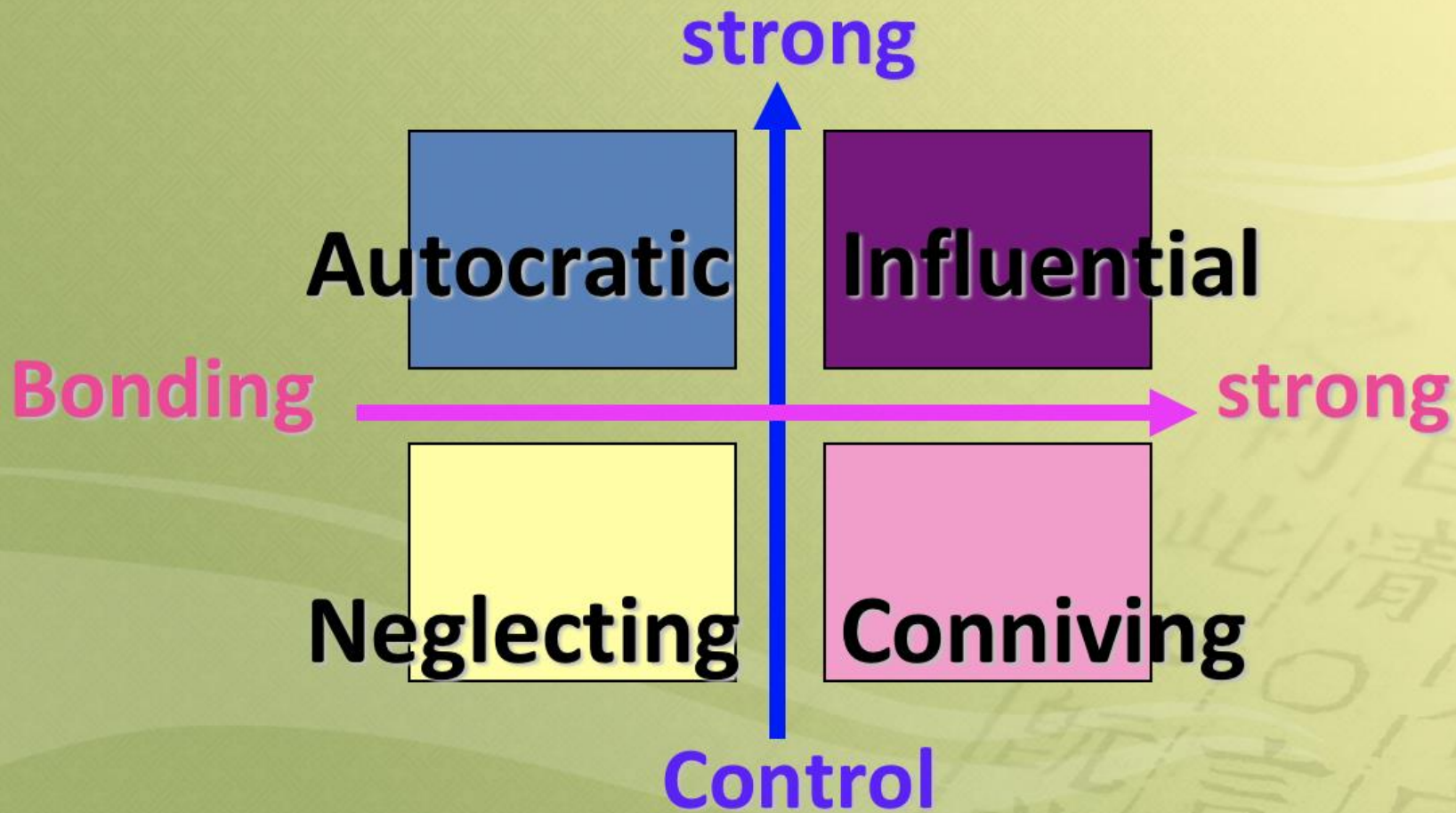


Teens often talk when engaged in doing something else, side by side, so create opportunities for this and be ready.



Be prepared to listen when they want to talk - many times it will be at an awkward time.

Parenting...



Talking to Teens

I feel..... When you
because.....and I would like....

4 part Apology:

- 1. This is what I did to offend you.....
- 2. This is why it's offensive.....
- 3. This is what I should have done.....(and will do next time)
- 4. Will you forgive me? (wait for an answer)

...and finally,

Keep a sense of humour. It will pass.

In the meantime...

Homework Wine Pairings