



Skin, Bones, Hearts & Private Parts, 2020

Adolescent Sexuality in the
Age of Social Media

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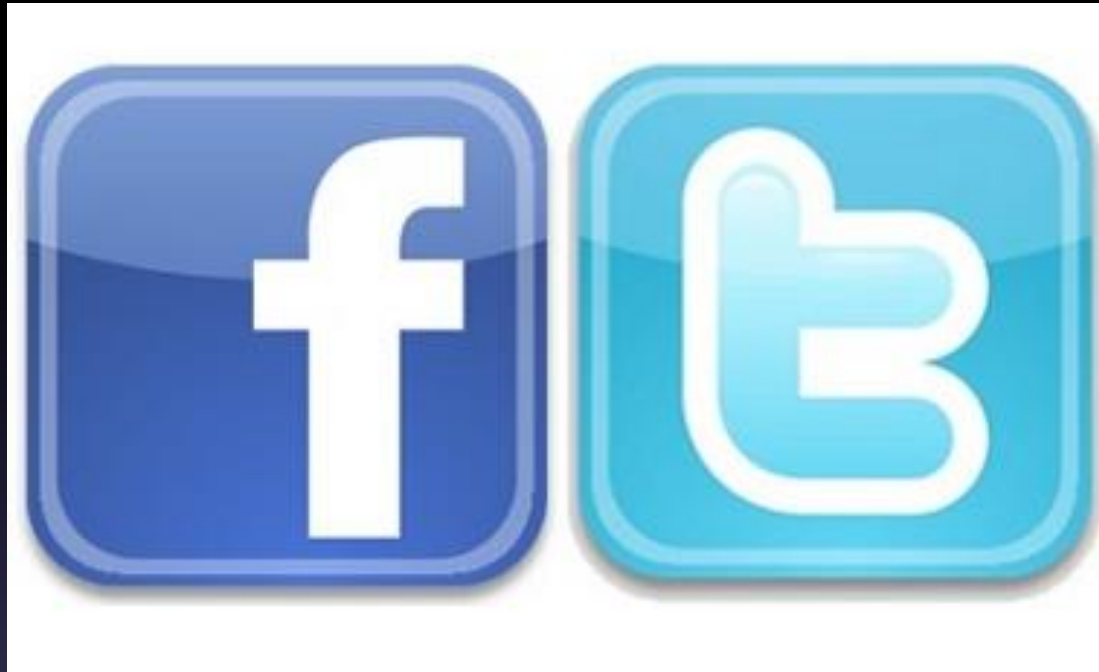
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Disclosures

- Vendor: Cord Blood Registry
- Speaker's Bureau / Advisory Board:
AMAG, TherapeuticsMD, Hologic, El
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Objectives

Participants Will:

1. Describe 2 neuroendocrine influences in adolescence
2. Describe how social comparison impacts identity formation
3. Increase familiarity with how teens use social media to explore their personal growth and development issues
4. Describe effective communication strategies when working with teens



Everything is
different now.



Is that
really true?

What we'll cover

- Biologic influences on behavior
- Adolescent psychosocial development
- How social media and networking impacts normal developmental tasks
- The questions and challenges that teens face
- Strategies for clinicians who work with teens

Not enough time to cover

- Internet addiction
- Sleep disturbances
- Impact on family
- Academic impact
- Sexual Identity Mobility/Fluidity

Biologic Influences on Behavior



Hormonal Influences

- Estrogen – primes the pump
- Progesterone – balances estrogen, impacts mood
- Testosterone – kick starts aggression, seduction, pursuit, no time for cuddling
- Oxytocin – released at orgasm, increases connectivity, bonding
- Dopamine – the reward hormone



The Female Brain

- On a hormonal roller coaster from increased Estrogen
- Obsession with her looks
- Wants to be attractive & sexually desirable
- She needs to be liked and socially connected

It only takes 20 seconds

- Female brain becomes “illogical” in the throes of romance
- The act of hugging or cuddling releases oxytocin
- Switches off the caution circuits
- Leads to trusting & believing everything the person says



The Male Brain

- Biologically programmed to have sex
- Difficult to override with higher order thinking
- The sexual pursuit area of a boy's brain grows twice as large as girls

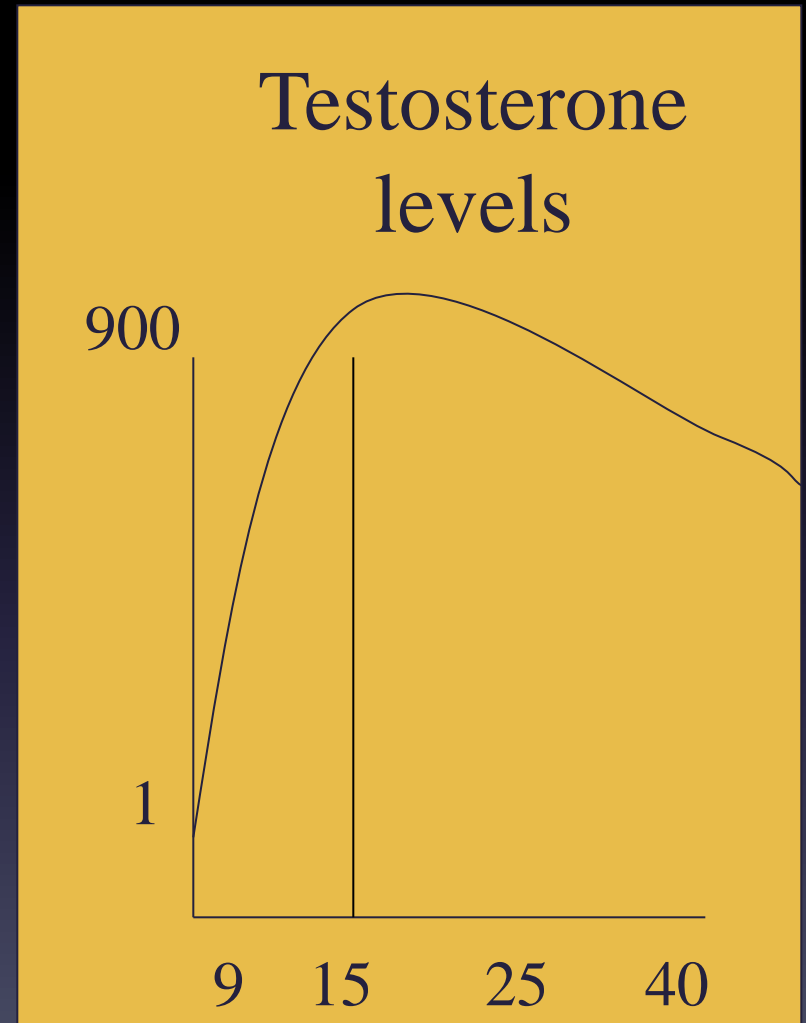
Brizendine, L .The Male Brain, 2010.

Changing Brains


For males exponential
↑ in testosterone
between 9 -15

Equivalent of 1 cup of
beer/day at age 9

Increases to 2
gallons/day by 15



It's a wonder they can think

- Men decide if someone is “hot” in 1/5 second
- If interested, testosterone will surge within 5 minutes
- For some men/boys after sex:  The *more* bonded the partner is the *less* interested he becomes

Psychosocial Development

- Physical maturity before cognitive and psychological maturity
- Alternate between invincibility & insecurity
- Increased risk-taking behavior
- Have a deeper capacity for caring, sharing & developing more intimate relationships

Psychosocial Development

- With appearance & body changes:
increased preoccupation/obsession with
every aspect of body image:
- Height, weight, clothes, acne, hair, etc.
- Peers become more influential

As much as 11 hours/day exposed
to some type of screen



Forming an Identity in the Internet Age

Instant 1 touch access to:

The entire world of images & information



Gathering Information

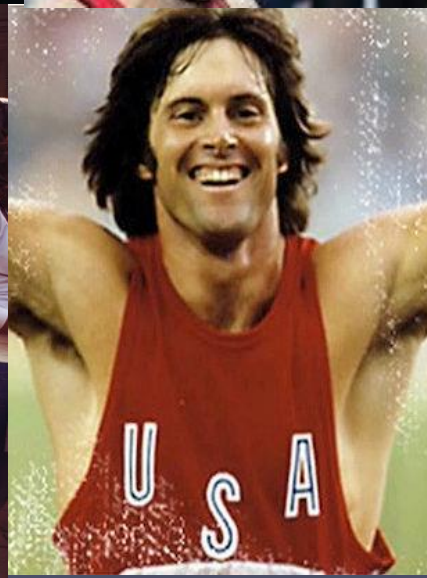
Do others have the same feelings and questions?

Where do I fit in?

They May Live With These People



From Shocking to Familiar



Who Knew?



L G B T Q Q

- LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
- Two Q's to cover both bases: Queer and Questioning

I P 2S A A

- **I for Intersex**, people with two sets of genitalia or various chromosomal differences
- **P for Pansexual**: People who refuse to be pinned down on the Kinsey scale
- **2S for Two-Spirit**, a First Nation tradition that considers sexual minorities to have both male and female spirits
- **A for Asexual**, people who do not identify with any orientation
- **A for Allies**, the community thrives best with loving supporters
 - Though they are not really part of the community itself

Let's Ask Siri

Sexual Media Content

- Adolescents internalize messages about sexuality, masculinity, femininity, pursuit
- *Negative* self-comparison and increased body consciousness inhibits sexual activity
- Valuing appearance over performance leads to self-objectification – increasing sexual behavior

Study of Dutch Adolescents

Using on-line resources to:

- Find information or advice related to romance and sexuality
- Search for and view pornographic or erotic material
- Communicate romantic and sexual i.e. cybersex/sexting

Findings

- They perceived the Internet as a useful source of:
 - Sexual information
 - Stimulation
 - Inspiration
 - Communication

Also Found

- The teens also perceived a range of negative consequences and risks related to sex-related online behaviors
- They were particularly concerned with pornography's potential to create unrealistic expectations about sex and sexual attractiveness

Not Me: But Maybe Them

- Participants generally believed *they had* the necessary skills to navigate through the online sexual landscape in a responsible way
- Although they believed other young people *could be* influenced inadvertently and adversely by sex-related online content

Key Tasks of Adolescence

1 To Stand Out

- Develop an identity & pursue autonomy apart from parents

2 To Fit In

- Find comfortable affiliations and gain acceptance from peers



Who Am I?





Standing Out

- Present oneself to others
- Try on different roles

Why use Social Media?

- Communicate with & acquire information about others
- Stay in touch, make plans
- Get to know people better
- Present yourself to others

Shapiro, L.A.S, & Margolin, G, 2014.



Adolescent Friendships

- Less shared activities than childhood
- Key components:
 - Trust
 - Self-disclosure
 - Loyalty

How to present yourself

- Most teens share with varying degrees of accuracy, honesty, and openness, information that previously would have been private or reserved for select individuals
- Naivete – communicating with predators
- Over sharing photos, frequent status updates, editing

On-Line Self Warranting

What you post about yourself

What your friends post

The types of avatars you create

Do you edit your photos

The likes and comments you make

Social Comparison Theory

- Developed in 1954 by Leon Festinger, PhD
- Upward/Downward comparisons are normal
- Innate drive to evaluate ourselves often in comparison to others

Compare and Despair

- People vary in Social Comparison Orientation (SCO)
- People high SCO:
 - Poorer self-perception
 - Lower self-esteem
 - More negative affect balance
 - *Heavier Facebook Use*

For Women, More Time On FB Led To More:

- Frequent body & weight comparisons
- Negative feelings about their bodies
- Attention to the physical appearance of others
- Eating disorders



Males and Accomplishment

- Males who viewed successful male profiles felt further from their ideal career status than those who viewed profiles of less successful individuals¹

“They are happier and having better lives than I am”²

1. Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011.

2. Chou HT, Edge N. Cyberpsychology, Feb, 2012.



Teen boys who felt less masculine:

More likely to create Avatars
with larger muscles

And yet, it doesn't improve their
own grip strength

Lee-Won RJ, et al.
Cyberpsychol Behav
Soc Netw. Jan, 2017



- Start & end the day checking Social Media
- Disrupts solitary activities, sleep, studying
- Even in fact to face interactions, many teens & adults are on their phones

Texting Addiction?

- Dopamine pleasure centers in the brain light up
- Similar to heroin, cocaine and other opioid addictions
- Some teens text and re-text constantly, for the “hit”
- What does that do for developing brains, social interactions?

Texting Pitfalls That Impact Relationships

- Absence of non-verbal cues
- Absence of uncomfortable pauses
- No way to read facial expressions
- Emoji's can only communicate so much
- Shortened phrases without context

Fitting In

- Finding your tribe
- Getting recognition, validation
- Safety in numbers
- Tribes change as the teen changes



Mirrors Off-line Lives?

“For a child who is comfortable socially, technology will not change their ability to interact, and they’ll use this tool as a way to get even more social. And, a child who’s not naturally comfortable socially may turn to these screens to interact, and they won’t get practice face to face.”

Yaldha Uhls

OffLine Social Lives?

- Those with strong offline social skills also appear to have more online connections and contacts
 - Does it improve or resemble their already strong relationships?
- Some with more limited social success offline appear to derive enhanced relationship satisfaction online
 - If they find online communications more comfortable

Ask

Don't Tell

Improving Your Efficacy When
Communicating with Teens

You Possess

2 Ears

&

1 Mouth

to

Listen twice as much
as you talk



It's normal to:

- Be shocked
- Project your feelings onto your patient
- Forget that you were the same age once
- Feel overwhelmed by what you're hearing
- Disengage or treat the teen as abnormal



“If I’m too accepting, it may communicate that I condone this choice”

Projecting Our Negative Judgments

Leads patients to:

- Not return
- Not trust
- Become further alienated & isolated
- Be less motivated
- Feel unworthy of good care
- Fulfill your poor expectations

Everyone wants to know

Am I normal?

Will you accept me
or judge me?

Will I be ok?

Am I Loveable?



Remember, Teens:

- Don't know who they are yet
- Take risks
- Don't know *what* they don't know
- Are impulsive
- Try new things and try on new roles

It's Still the Same

- Are they safe?
- Is it consensual?
- What are the risks?
- What myths can you clarify?
- Are they thinking about their choices?



Ask.....Don't Tell

- Helps Teens problem solve ahead of time
- Pause and think
- Anticipate unexpected outcomes
- Pre-decide what you will and won't do
- Reduces impulsive actions

Stop, Pause, Breathe, Think, Decide

Helping Teens Make Decisions

- Many teens are used to their parents helping them make decisions
- Many are not familiar with problem solving
- Many are caught unaware by circumstances and react without thinking

What IF Questions

- What would You do IF:
- A friend/your partner wanted you to do something you weren't comfortable with?
- They wanted you to get high, get drunk, harm someone, take a risk you weren't ready for?

Learn to Trust Your Gut

- Break down decision making
- How do you check in with the messages your body is sending
 - Racing heart
 - Nausea
 - Bad feeling

Thank You

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