



The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries about the Teenage Brain Tell Us about Our Kids

By Barbara Strauch

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A groundbreaking look at the teenage brain for anyone who has puzzled over the mysterious and often infuriating behavior of a teenager.

While many members of the scientific community have long held that the growing pains of adolescence are primarily psychological, Barbara Strauch highlights the physical nature of the transformation, offering parents and educators a new perspective on erratic teenage behavior. Using plain language, Strauch draws upon the latest scientific discoveries to make the case that the changes the brain goes through during adolescence are as dramatic and crucial as those that take place in the first two years of life, and that teenagers are not entirely responsible for their sullen, rebellious, and moody ways. Featuring interviews with scientists, teenagers, parents, and teachers, **The Primal Teen** explores common challenges—why teens go from articulate and mature one day to morose and unreachable the next, why they engage in risky behavior—and offers practical strategies to help manage these formative and often difficult years.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Strauch, medical science and health editor at the New York Times, sets out to offer reassurance to parents baffled by their kids' seemingly irrational and erratic behavior. She discusses the latest research, including brain scans that show changes in the brain's structure and function that could explain the crazy behavior exhibited by teens. In addition to reviewing various research projects around the country, Strauch also includes discussions with both parents and teenagers. Parents lament their inability to understand why a straight-A student suddenly loses interest in school or starts behaving miserably. The teens are surprisingly open about their often ill-advised behavior, but seem unable to offer reasons for such actions. One possible explanation, still debated by scientists, is whether adolescence is a critical brain period, that is, an important period of development. Particularly interesting is the chapter Crazy by Design, in which Strauch offers evidence of the cognitive and emotional development of teens. Just as there are growth spurts for babies and young children, there are developmental milestones for teens roughly ages 11, 15 and 19. For example, While a younger teen might see a parent as a hypocrite if he holds two opposing views, an older teenager would begin to understand how two things can be true at the same time, and weigh the evidence for each. While the book does not offer how-to guidance, readers will be struck by the wonderfully candid comments by those interviewed as well as Strauch's insightful narrative.

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From Library Journal

Contrary to what scientists have assumed until recently, teenagers act weird not because of hormones but because their brains are still trying to get all the wiring right. From the health and science editor at the New York Times.

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From [Booklist](#)

New York Times medical science and health editor Strauch, the mother of two teenagers, sees the irony in a book about the teenage brain. Indeed, she grants that many may contend that the phrase *teenage brain* is a kind of oxymoron. But in recent years, she has seen reports of studies on teenage brain development whose claims seem preposterous. Although scientists had long believed that the brain was fully developed before puberty, they were now asserting that this was incorrect. The human brain, they said, is still very much in a critical growth period throughout adolescence. Indeed, key areas of the brain, such as those that help the teenager to do the right thing and decipher complex nuances of emotion, are among the last to reach a stable, grown-up state. Throw ubiquitous raging hormones into the mix, and it is little wonder that adolescence is so thorny. Strauch's well-researched book explains studies that were impossible without such advanced technology as the MRI, in clear, compassionate layperson's language. May become a parents' must-read.

Donna Chavez

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nannie Hernandez:

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Carole Clark:

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James Ritchey:

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Matthew Haley:

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