

What You Need to Know About Your Teen's Escalating Emotions

I have three children past their teen years, and I currently have four teens in our home. Let's pause right now as I ask for prayer. Do you also have a teen—an emotion-filled creature—in your house? I'll pause and say a prayer for you too.

One thing I've learned with these teens is that their emotions run deep. Here are a few things you really need to know about their emotions.

1. Teens feel everything very deeply. It may seem as if teens are just being dramatic, but the emotions are real. All emotions—good and bad—are felt toward the extreme.

Hormones in teens are a very real thing. Hormones cause emotions to swing, and it's important to help teens understand that. I let my teens know that when I'm hormonal, I feel as if everything's wrong with the world—but it's just the hormones. Because we talk about it, my teen daughters often tell me, "I'm ready to start my cycle; if I act crazy, tell me to chill."

And even though it may not be as obvious or drastic, teen boys deal with emotions too. Yet while hormones do play a part, it's more than that. Just as your teen is growing and developing during puberty, your teen's brain is too.

With these changes, a teen's emotion centers are heightened. The big, dramatic emotions feel real, and most of the time your teen is just as overwhelmed and surprised by these emotions as you are.

2. Teens lack common sense. Not only are they emotional, but teens are also impulsive. Your teen's frontal cortex is still developing. Even though teens look like adults, they don't have the same thinking skills. The developing frontal cortex is associated with decision-making, insight, judgment and inhibitory control. They really do lack common sense and aren't able to think things through as adults can. This leads to impulsive decision-making. It's not just your teen—it's all teens.

3. Teen brains have big needs. First, because of all the rapid growth and changes, teens need *sleep*. Because of all the growth and changes, their bodies need more rest: about 9-10 hours a night. They also need good nutrition. Teens who don't eat right become irritable and depressed. Good nutrition is needed to feed the changing brain. Teens also need physical exercise. Studies show that when kids are active, it actually helps brain development. {eoa}

Tricia Goyer is a busy mom of 10, grandmother of two and wife to John. Somewhere around the hustle and bustle of family life, she manages to find the time to write fictional tales, delighting and entertaining readers and non-fiction titles, offering encouragement and hope. A best-selling author, Tricia has published 50 books to date and has written more than 500 articles. She is a two-time Carol Award winner as well as a Christy and ECPA Award nominee. To connect with Tricia, go to or

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