Framing the Year: The World of Middle Schoolers

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Brain Changes During Adolescence

- Prefrontal Cortex - Involved in decision making, planning, inhibiting inappropriate behavior, social functioning. EXECUTIVE FUNCTION
  - State of rapid change and development, goes through **Synaptic Sprouting & Pruning**

- Dopaminergic Pathways are Rewired
  - Limbic system (emotion and reward processing) is **hypersensitive to rewarding risks**
  - Surprising and unexpected rewards trigger extra dopamine releases
  - Adolescents are relatively good at determining the negative consequences of a risky behavior. The positive outcome and the associated dopamine release simply outweigh any negatives.

Academic Support

Executive Function

- In class (planners, schedule, etc)
- Advisory
- At home

Classroom Structure (routines)

- Warm up
- Skill practice vs. content
- Why did I learn this?

Rewarding Risk Taking!!



Social Support (Rob's Practice)



White water rafting

- Friends one day, enemies the next
- What actually happened?
- Interview for resilience as opposed to pain (That sounds really hard, what should we do next? I love how you responded to that!)
- When the rapid is over, debrief and provide perspective

Structured groupings and activities vs. unstructured free time

Repair: "you break it, you fix it"

At Home

Routines!

What actually happened?

- Triangulate with Billings

Help students (and yourselves) find humor and joy in the process.

How can we structure “risk” for our kids outside of school?



Questions?



Breakout Sessions

- What are the joys and challenges of parenting your child at this stage of development?

- What does “risk-taking” look like for your child right now?
  - What are your hopes and concerns for how your child will take risks during this developmental period?

- What is working for you as you transition to parenting an adolescent?

- What is on your mind as you think about your child’s development next year and the following?