

[Getting to Calm](#)

by Laura S. Kastner, Ph.D & Jennifer Wyatt, Ph.D.

This book give various scenarios and possible response for handling situations. The section on the teen brain and love/relationships/sexuality was insightful. Major themes:

- 1) Be an engaged parent [ABC's of family Health: p 258-259](#).
- 2) Remain calm (C-Cool Down A-Assess options L-Listen with empathy M-Make a plan)
- 3) Be prepared: Parents do have a bigger influence than we think during the teen years
- 4) Brain development and the teen (protecting the brain (avoiding drug use), assist/support teens through their relationships, and work to develop their social and emotional competence).

Balance important: (p.4) "Although clear in their authority, there's ongoing give and take with the teen...A useful standard is five to one: Each negative interaction needs to be balanced with five positive ones." How to deal with rudeness? (understand it is temporary [It's more about forming the self than parents realize when considering hormones, brain development peers and demands/expectations](#)) Ignore, address directly, or diffuse.

Parenting styles Chapter 1: (Avoid extremes and seek middle ground - CAPS ideal)
Permissive...**AUTHORITATIVE**...Authoritarian
Low control...**THOUGHTFUL CONTROL**...Excessive control
Cold and disengaged...**WARM & APPROPRIATELY ENGAGED**...Enmeshed
Communication cutoff...**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**...Unbounded talk

Brain changes p18: Massive reorganization of the brain. The prefrontal cortex undergoes reconstruction. Over 1/2 of existing synapses are "whittled away in this critical area for thinking, as new connections are rewired and the brain is ramping up to become faster and more efficient once the process is completed." resulting in increased opportunity but also increased vulnerability in the teen. [Just when they are getting independence, their ability for good judgement is gone. "literally losing parts of their mind."](#) p 19. While their ability to make clear judgements is decreasing, [their emotions are directing their actions more](#). To make best use of this development, "Teens need to be interacting with people to develop social skills. They need to be out in the world, engaging in a mix of extracurricular activities, and coping with and solving a range of problems."

VERY INTERESTING: [Teens misread signs of emotions](#). "Shown a face, teens were found to mistake looks of fear and surprise as anger and hostility. Brain images revealed that the emotional part of their brains were lighting up during this test, indicating that they were using this part of the brain to decode the facial expression....the prefrontal cortex in teens has not yet developed to the point that it can

rein in the intense reactions of the emotional part of their brains that's screaming, "I want what I want!" p20 "big engine (autonomy), poor driving skills (re-wiring of prefrontal cortexes and emotional), faulty brakes (lack of impulse control), and high-octane gas (intense emotions)." (p21)

Web Facts: Most all use to stay connected, less inhibited than face to face, most teens say things on-line that they would not directly say. Abuse: most by people the kids know, give too much information, 30% teen girls sexually harassed in chat rooms (only 7% tell their parents), 1/3 of all teens report threatening messages, private messages forwarded, embarrassing picture posted without consent or having on-line rumors spread. 70% of teens have accidentally come across pornography on the Web. pg 160. Common, those youth seeking porn, less likely feel affection is necessary for sex and those viewing sexual explicit images are more likely to see women as "playthings."

Violent video games: "exposure to violent video games is a direct cause of aggressive behavior, aggressive thinking, aggressive feelings, and cardiovascular arousal...decreased helping behavior." p 165. Similarly excessively violent TV viewing resulted increased incident of violent behaviors. Violent games are teaching violence.

The Teen Brain in Love: The brain does react like it is on "drugs" the reward part of the brain is activated. p 165 "sex and romance are related but separate issues." remember to have a talk about relationships rather than just the sex talk.

Things to try to avoid: minimize their feelings, overlook the value of the relationships, being too involved, don't assume it's just about sex, but also pay attention to when it is getting more and more intimate, avoid being overly inclusive of the person they are dating. **Do:** maintain a balanced healthy relationship with your teen. p170 "the quality of the attachment between parent and child influence the quality of teens' dating relationships, which, in turn, influence teen's capacity for long-term, committed relationships." The teens need to feel supported and secure.

Puberty: "A parent's job is to take the lead in supplying teens with copious information about what's happening to their bodies, whether it be menstruation, breast development, genital growth, or nocturnal emissions. Get books, sign up for classes together and use every possible natural opportunity to reassure teens that what they're experiencing and feeling is a normal part of human development." p 187. Educate what is going on with both girls and boys.

Talking to Teens about Sexuality: "experts estimate that parents are two years behind where their teens need them to be with regard to sex education. Only one out of three parents of sexually active 14-year-olds realizes that their child has had sex.....A position paper from the Society for Adolescent Medicine recommends that teens should have the human right to information about their sexual health.....teens need sexuality education that teaches them refusal and negotiation skills..."(p 189). "Children whose

parents talk with them about sex have no increased rates of sexual activity. And when they do become sexually active, they're more responsible about practicing safe sex. Research shows that teens with the most connected relationships with their parents have the most responsible sexual behavior, including delaying intercourse, being less promiscuous, and practicing safe sex." p 189. An open, honest and consistent communication pattern is the best. [Interesting list of responsibility important for youth choosing to engage in sexual activity: pg 198-200.](#)