

Risk and Teen Driving - Part II

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Consider this...

Different regions of the teen brain are developing on different timetables. Still being forged are the connections between neurons that affect not only emotional skills but also physical and mental abilities. This developmental imbalance may explain why your intelligent 16-year-old doesn't think twice about getting into a car driven by a friend who is drunk.

The teen's prefrontal cortex, where judgments are formed, is practically asleep at the wheel. At the same time, the limbic system, where raw emotions such as anger are generated, is entering a stage of development in which it goes into hyper-drive.

As the experienced driver knows the combination of physical and mental abilities necessary to drive safely and responsibility demands the coordination of physical and mental reactions and judgments.

So what does a parent do?

Discuss...

Your concerns and love for your teenager's safety

- That driving is an exciting and potentially dangerous.
- Your expectations that your teen **will** drive safely.
- Your teen **will** obey the traffic laws.
- You should tell them about you've seen and experiences good and bad about the act of driving.
- Your observations of particular driving situations.
- There are good and bad risks.
- The privilege of driving can be lost.

Learn ...

- The painful fact that research indicates that 60 percent of a teenager's tendency to act impulsively and misjudge potential danger is genetic!
- Researchers also think that new experiences, especially those with a *hint* of danger or the thrill of the new, tap into a teenager's a reward system, a set of neurons that link emotional centers to many other parts of the brain and that can produce feelings of intense pleasure.
- The highway laws of the state.
- Know the limitations of the licensing process.
- Your teens driving habits and actions.

Practice...

- Practice, Practice, Practice, this is the most critical factor in protecting your teenage driver!
- Patience, tolerance and consistency

Thanks to Shannon Brownlee for information and insight into the cognition of the adolescent.

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