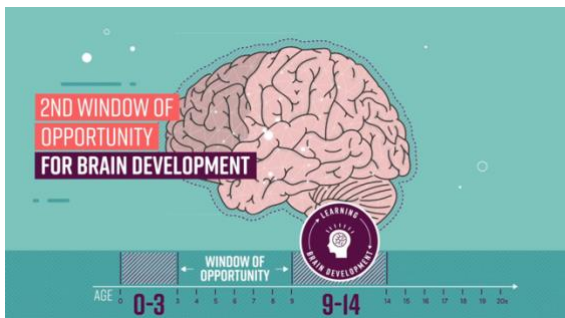


THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN: A SECOND WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

We used to think the shaping of brain wiring systems tapered off after early childhood, but neuroscience tells us the brain goes through another rapid phase of change from age 9 to 14, a second window of opportunity. Early adolescence is a crucial period for brain development where many challenges begin to emerge. It is also a time of opportunity when rapid changes can be harnessed to set adolescents on a positive path. Puberty initiates intense hormonal changes when the brain is forming better and faster connections between systems improving the ability to make decisions, solve problems, understand consequences and to gain more control over emotions and behavior. At the same time, the adolescent brain goes through a period of greater sensitivity to social evaluation and emotional reactions, increased sensation seeking interest in social relationships and exploration of identity all begin to emerge. Early adolescents bring on broadening experiences, acquisition of new skills and formation of social networks that will have lasting impact for the rest of a young person's life.



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