UNDERSTAND AND MANAGING TEEN BEHAVIORS IN LIBRARIES
REVIEW OF WEBINAR

- BIOLOGICAL & CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR
- RISK AND REWARD
- REVIEW VERBAL JUDO TACTICS, GENDER SPEAK AND COMMUNICATION STYLES
- DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS
“adolescents are not monsters. they are just people trying to learn how to make it among the adults of the world who are probably not so sure themselves.”

Virginia Satir
CULTURAL INFLUENCES

In his forward to Margaret Mead's classic study of adolescence in Samoa, Franz Boas wrote:

“... much of what we ascribe to human nature is no more than a reaction to the restraints put upon us by our civilization.” (Mead 1928).
WHEN DO WE BECOME AN ADULT?
AMBIGUITY AND TRANSITION

- Hormonally, biologically and culturally, adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood.

- Teens can be expected to behave like an adult, but are still treated like a child.
- Some teens have adult responsibilities at home, but few such responsibilities outside of the home.
THE TEEN BRAIN
"No other animal has an equivalent period...so that implies teenagers are doing something useful for us, otherwise we wouldn't have evolved them. For the brain to become bigger and brighter still, perhaps we had to evolve teenagers. They were a wonderful new innovation that gave us an extra decade of paced cerebral reorganization, which allowed the brain to attain its unprecedented size without going off the rails."

Dr. David Brainbridge
"...Right around the time of puberty and on into the adult years is a particularly critical time for the brain sculpting to take place...

... It's sort of unfair to expect teens to have adult levels of organizational skills or decision-making before their brains are finished being built..."

-Dr. Jay Giedd
THE TEEN BRAIN

- The centers of the teen's brain over emotion mature faster than the cognitive centers. They are more likely to read emotions into interactions.

- The prefrontal cortex does not finish maturing until the early 20s.

The prefrontal cortex is responsible, among other things, for judgment and impulse control.
WHY TEENS SEEM SELFISH

- The maturation lag between the cognitive and emotional centers of the brain can help explain why teens seem impulsive and insensitive.

- Teens do not have as much myelin or “white matter” as adults. Myelin helps communication between nerve cells. Judgment and empathy may be hampered by slow moving nerve cells.
“the toddler must say no in order to find out who she is. the adolescent says no to find out who she is not.”

Louise Kaplan
RISK AND REWARD
REWARDS AND RISK BEHAVIORS

▸ Studies have found that teens “pleasure centers” of the brain light up with more intensity in risky activities than adults. The bigger the risk, the higher the intensity. Dopamine levels peak in adolescence.

▸ However, drinking in teens greatly increases their risk of alcohol dependence in adults.

▸ Teens are four times more likely to get in a car accident, and three times as likely to die in one.

▸ Rates of death by injury between ages 15–19 are 6 times the rate of youth aged 10–14
COMPLIANCE
SAFETY
LONG TERM PATRON

GOALS OF THE LIBRARY
VERBAL JUDO

The Gentle Art of Persuasion

- Listen better and always be heard
- Learn what never to say
- Engage people through empathy
- Stop verbal attacks in their tracks

WITH A NEW PREFACE
PARAPHRASING

1. Word of Insertion

2. Empathetic sentence
   • “This seems to be bothering you, let me make sure I understand you.”

3. Paraphrase
Listen
Empathize
Ask
Paraphrase
Summarize
**EMPATHY IS MOST IMPORTANT**

- In Verbal Judo, and in serving patrons, have empathy above all else.

- Realize that your expectations of a teenager may not be fair. Put yourself in their shoes.

- Realize that even if you don’t think a situation is a big deal, a teenager may see it differently.
GIVE OPTIONS & CONSEQUENCES

▸ “You can continue your conversation here, or go outside.”

▸ “You can return her phone, or leave for the day.”

▸ “I know you like Minecraft, but you can’t yell while playing while the library is open. We are having an after hours party next week though, you can be louder then.”

▸ “If you choose to hit your friend and break the library rules, you’ve chosen to leave for the week.”
“Because I said so”
“Calm Down”
“What’s your problem?”
“You Never” or “You Always”
GENERALIZATIONS AND TONE

- There’s ALWAYS and exception to ALWAYS.

- A teen’s “reward center” part of the brain can easily overpower the “control center.” Looking good in front of their friends can give more reward than following the library directions. Correct teens one-on-one if you can, and if you can’t, correct the entire group.

- Tone and nonverbal language is more important than the actual words.
“If you understand gender differences in what I call conversational style, you may not be able to prevent disagreements from arising, but you stand a better chance of preventing them from spiraling out of control.”

Deborah Tannen
WHY GENDER SPEAK?

- Women are more likely then men to use communication as a tool to build relationships and establish equilibrium.
- Library staff members are female-dominated while their patrons may not be.
- Dyads vs. Groups
- Nonverbal communication
- Be particularly aware when correcting or in a confrontation with teen boys.
GENDER SPEAK BASICS

- Tag words- “I think.” “Right?”
- Hedge words- “Maybe.” “In my opinion.”
- Apologizing- “Sorry, but you need to leave the library.”
- Nonverbal- tilting your head, crossing your arms
- Tone- making statements with a questioning tone, talking in a higher pitch

*From Deborah Tannen’s research and books*
LIBRARY POLICIES

▸ Before enforcing rules, you must have rules in place

▸ Make sure staff is on board with your rules and policies

▸ Establish your non-negotiables: then take the rest on a case by case basis

▸ Learns the teen’s names if possible

▸ Apply all rules equally, from kids to adults
IF YOU NEED TO ASK A TEEN TO LEAVE THE LIBRARY

1. Establish rules in the library

2. Make sure teens and other patrons know those rules—Are they visible? Consider having an orientation for students.

3. Give the teen a warning (unless the situation is severe, i.e. physical violence etc.)

4. Ask the teen to leave

5. Escort the teen out if necessary. Make sure they leave the property
The teens are being noisy how do you get them to be quiet?...
In your normal way?
In a passive/feminine way?
In a aggressive/ overly masculine way?
In a way trying to be “cool”?
By using verbal judo?

TRY IT OUT
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QUESTIONS?