

The Teenage Brain: Understanding the Physiological and Emotional World of an Adolescent

The teenager's brain has incredible potential, yet if youth and the adults that work with them do not understand this powerful organ, we may be missing out on opportunities to shepherd and mentor the next generation. This workshop will look at a teenager's brain development and its neurological stages, hormonal levels, stress functions, substance and addiction issues, and several other topics that give insight into why teenagers act and feel the ways that they do.

Kristy Williams has 12 years of experience as a full-time missionary in the context of youth ministry and leadership training. She has been serving primarily in Ukraine, although her love for training youth leaders also leads her to different opportunities in Central and Eastern Europe with her missionary organisation, Josiah Venture. Kristy is passionate about disciple-making and teaching leadership principles to youth leaders. She also develops ministries to public schools that help local churches build relationships with the teenagers and teachers in their neighborhood schools. Kristy and her husband, Ben, live in Lviv, Ukraine with their two school-aged children. She holds a Bachelors of Science in Finance, a Masters of Business Administration, an MA in Global Leadership, and is currently working on a PhD in Organisational Leadership.

I. Physiological aspects of the brain

A. Biblical framework: Psalm 139

B. Size, development

C. Areas and their functions

D. Gender differences – Genesis 1

II. Learning capabilities of the brain

A. Potential

B. Pruning

C. Sensitivities

III. Emotional aspects of the brain

A. Hormones

B. Addiction

C. Risk and rewards

D. Stress

IV. Caring for young people through their formative years

A. Compassion like Christ

B. Discipling like Paul (Timothy)

C. Spiritual formation in teens – identity in Christ (Eph. 1) and holistic integration of faith (1 Cor. 10:31, Luke 10:27)

Suggested Readings:

The Teenage Brain by Francis E. Jensen, MD. With Amy Ellis Nut

Brainstorm: The power and purpose of the teenage brain by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

All Grown Up and No Place to Go by David Elkind

Hurt 2.0 by Dr. Chap Clark

His Brain, Her Brain: How Divinely Designed Differences Can Strengthen Your Marriage by Walt Larimore, MD, & Barb Larimore