

Understanding the Adolescent Brain

AJH Parent Academy

By AJH COounselors

Presented by

AJH

Counselors

7th Grade

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Student Support

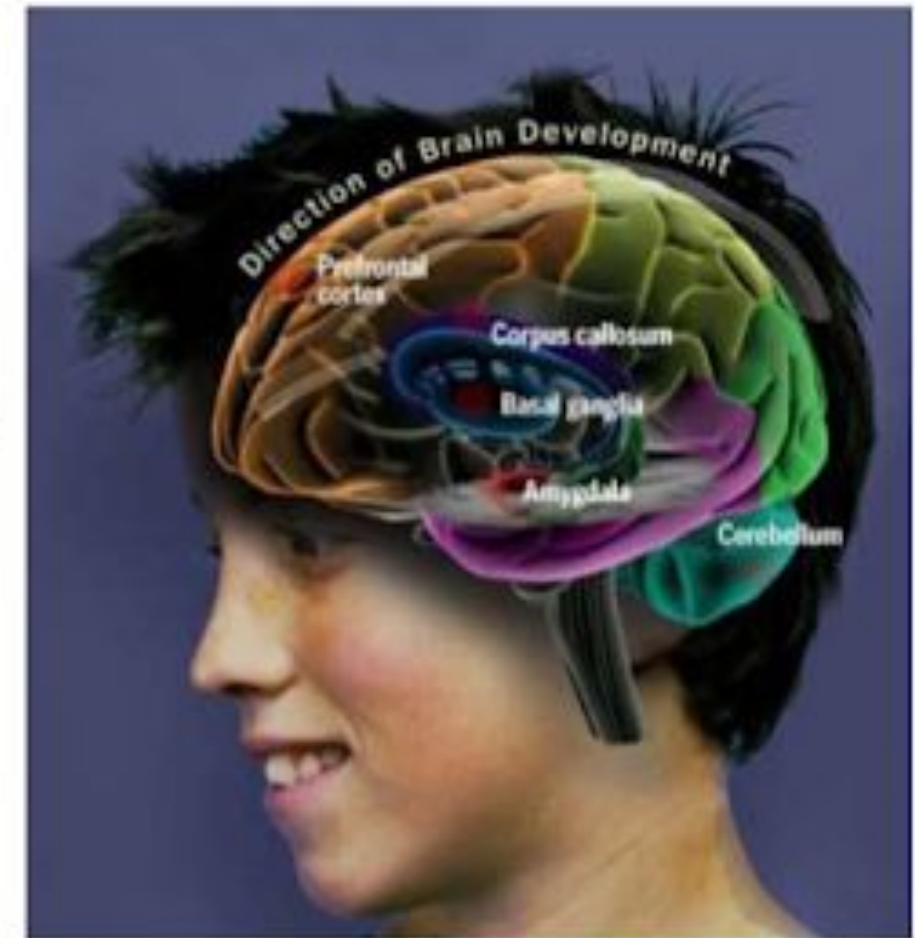
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Adolescent Brain Development

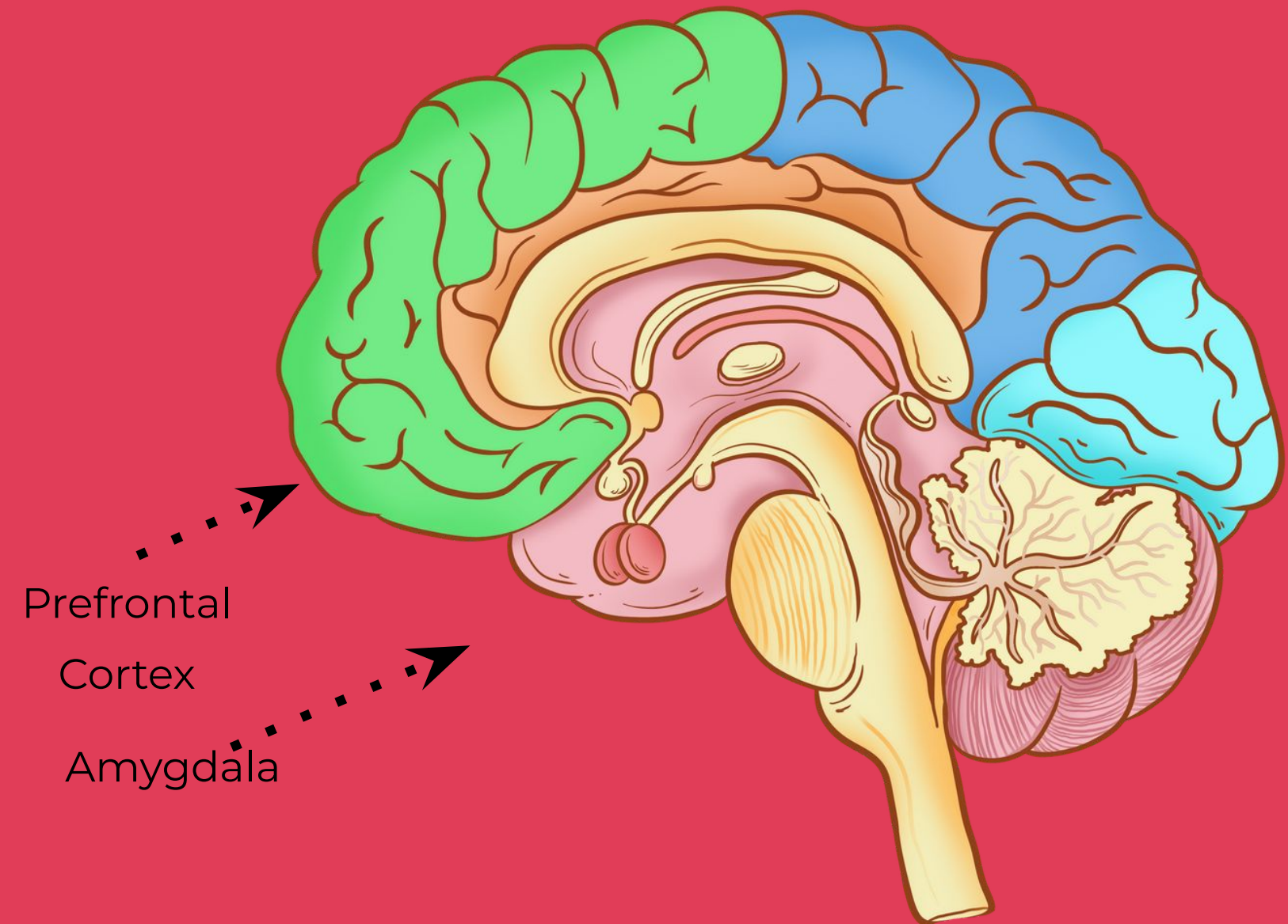
*A teenager's brain
"has a well-
developed
accelerator but
only a partly
developed brake."*

Laurence
Steinberg



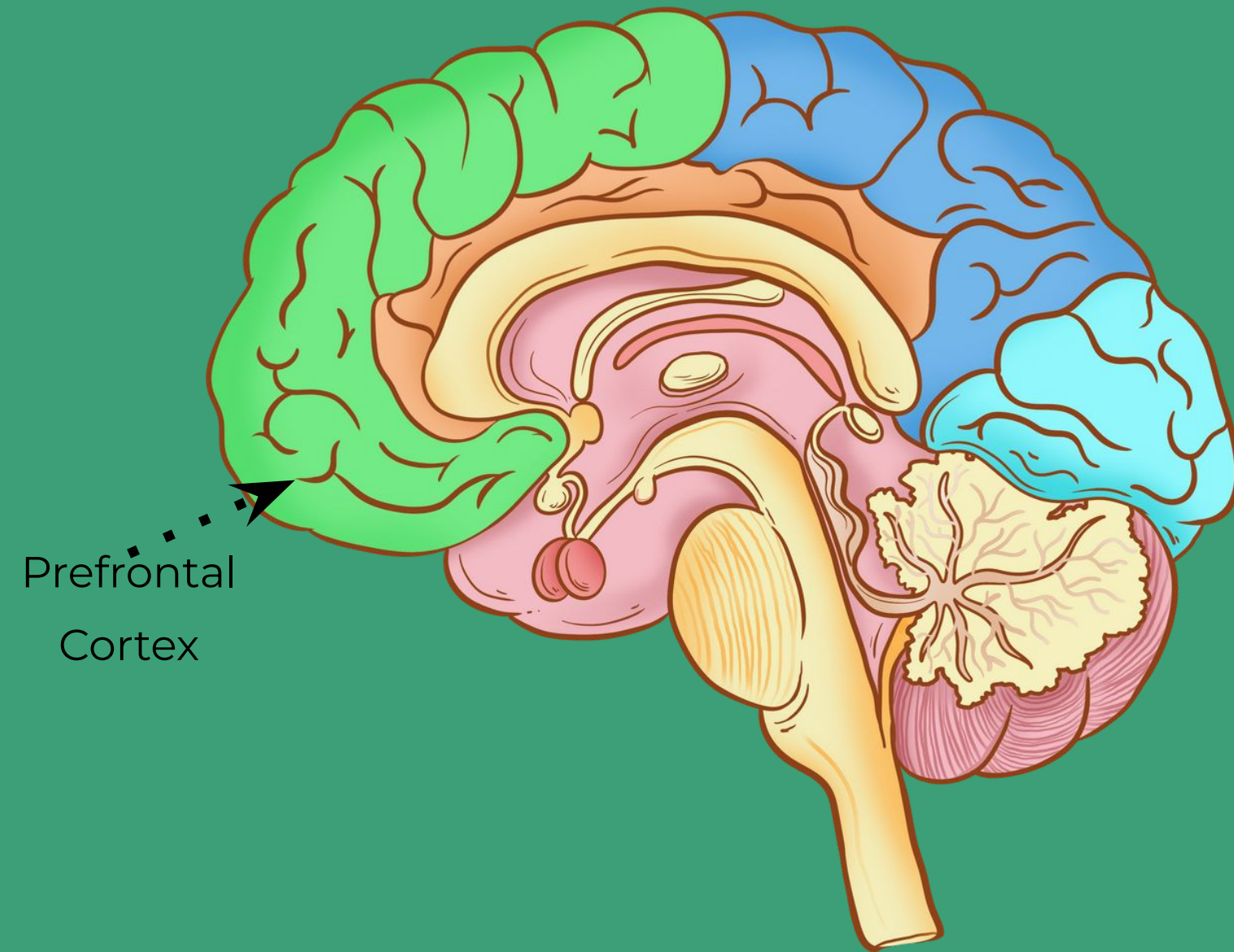
The different parts of the brain

- Brain development continues until the mid-twenties
- Adults think with the brain's rational part (prefrontal cortex)
- Teenagers process all of their information with the amygdala—the emotional center



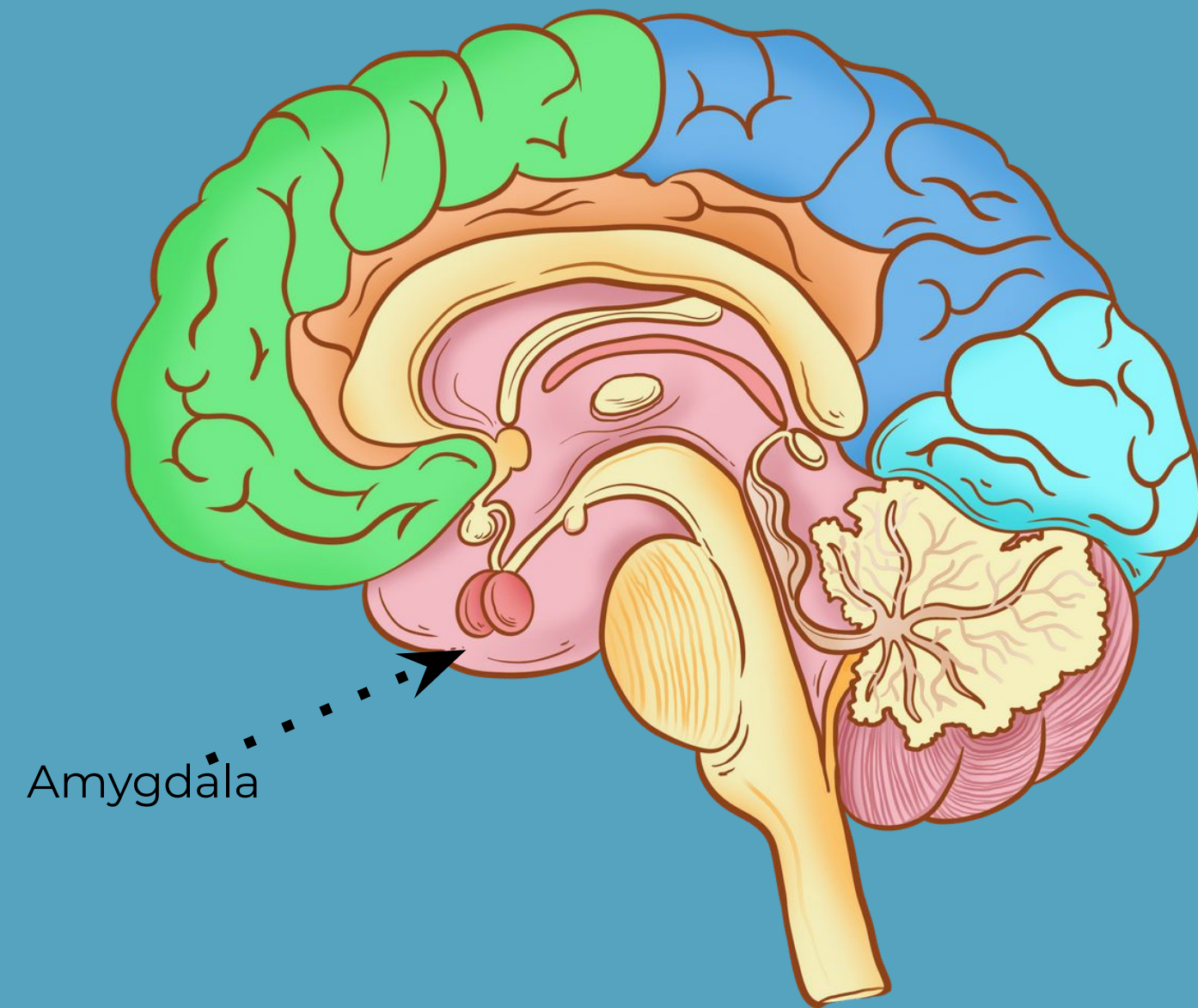
Prefrontal Cortex

The PFC is a front part of the brain responsible for thinking, decision-making and emotions. It helps us remember things, focus, and control impulses. When we learn new things, the PFC changes its connections between brain cells, allowing us to adapt and respond better to different situations.



Amygdala

The amygdala is an almond-shaped brain structure in the temporal lobe. It deals with emotions, especially fear, and is vital for memory and motivation as part of the limbic system.



Amygdala

"The Guard Dog"

Significance: The amygdala acts like a guard dog, always vigilant and alert to potential threats. Like a guard dog reacts quickly to protect its territory, the amygdala is responsible for processing emotions, particularly fear and strong emotions. It helps us respond to dangerous or emotional situations, ensuring our safety and well-being



What does this mean for an adolescent brain?

- The middle prefrontal cortex redevelops...which means they remaster skills learned in early childhood.
- It's a paradox: their brains are sharp, but they don't know what to do with them yet. They have fast-growing brain synapses and then sections that are not connected at all.

Behavior



- They start to question “Who am I” and forming identity, including self-concept and self-esteem
- They express themselves through debate due to new reasoning and logic skills
- They become very interested in fairness or justice

Behavior



- They begin to think more abstractly.
- They start developing their own beliefs and may take up a cause such as becoming vegetarian, women's rights, bettering the environment, etc.
- They spend an immense amount of time thinking about themselves--this is not out of selfishness, it's an actual stage of teenage brain development

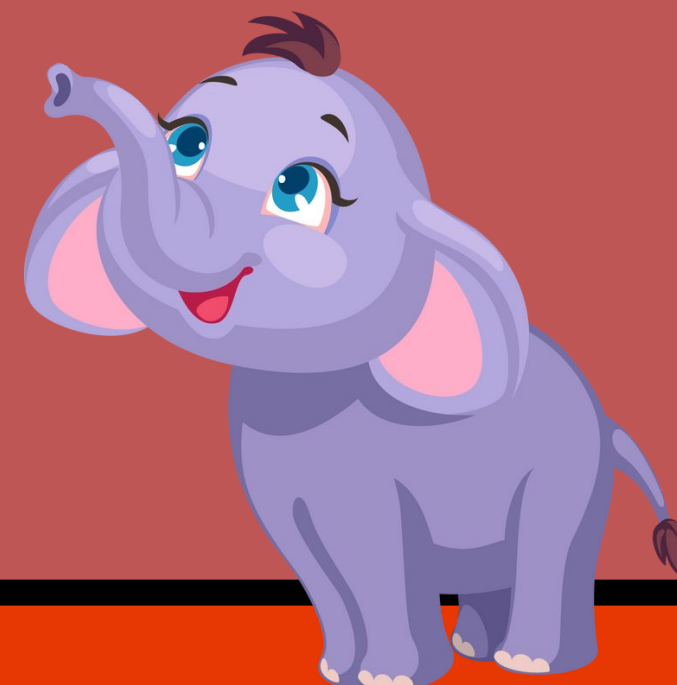
Behavior



- They have a different brain experience when reading emotions. They react from their limbic area (emotions) while adults react from their prefrontal cortex (rational).
- They are naturally impulsive and lack judgement.
- Social anxiety may increase because they start worrying what others are thinking of them.

What can parents/Teachers do?

- Discuss consequences—it helps their brain make the connections and wires the brain to make those connections more often
- Remind them of their resilience and competence—they play a part in changing bad situations
- Don't be too quick to jump in to “fix”—Help them with the process of problem solving



What can parents/Teachers do?

- Hold them responsible for their actions
- Be aware of their stage of life and supportive as they move forward
- Communicate feelings to expand their awareness
- Model and assist the child in developing decision making skills
- Don't take the behavior changes personally!



What does this mean for daily life & school?

- Teenagers are largely sleep-deprived. Changing hormones impact release of melatonin so they tend to fall asleep later. They NEED 8-10 hours each night!
- Sensory overload hinders recall—we can't close off the world, so they must learn how to manage
- Help them problem solve
- Practice with them the habits you want to create
- Stay close—be interested in what interests them

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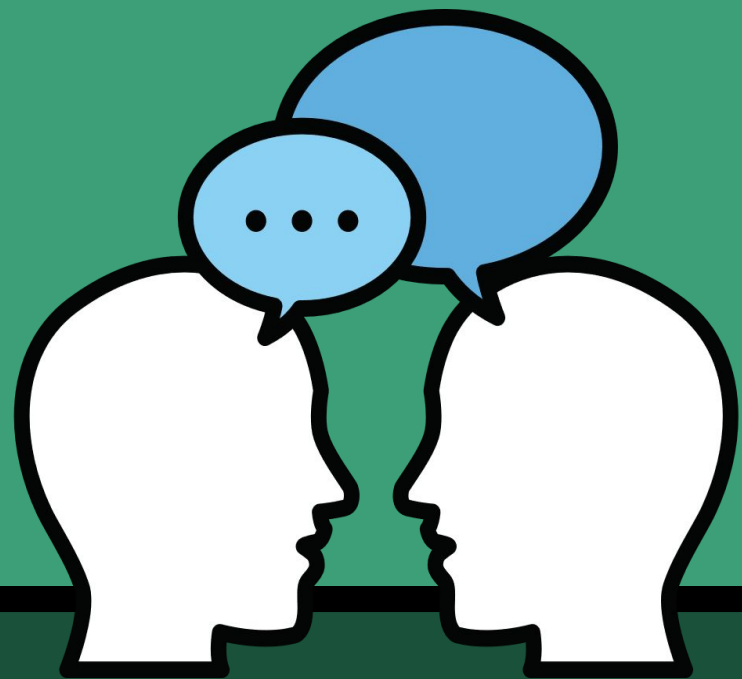
Organizational Strategies

- Prepare for the following day the night before (pick out clothes, load backpack, discuss any events, etc.)
- Come up with a system for documenting homework (Canvas, planner, list, etc.)
- Have a conversation to help them determine what works best for them
- Practice with them until it becomes a habit and then regularly check in - it takes 30 days to make or break a habit!



Organizational Strategies

- Model how to communicate with teachers and other adults
- Model how to advocate for themselves
- Show them how to check their grades (HAC or grade app)
- Do a regular “clean-out” of unnecessary papers and school items
 - start out weekly
 - or progress report then report card time
 - at end of six weeks, take out papers not needed
 - keep quizzes and tests to study for final exams, all the rest can go – but check with teachers



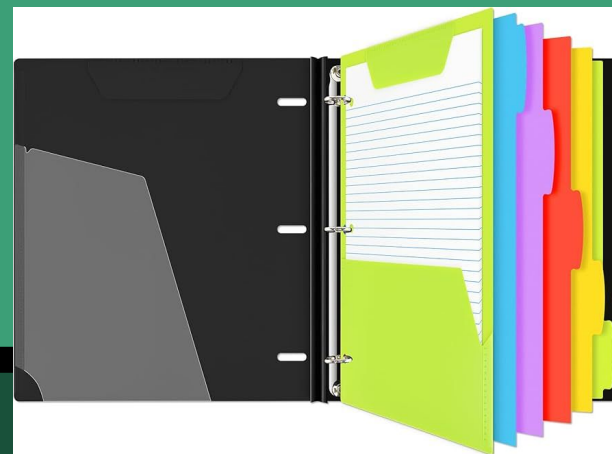
Canvas Demo

- Canvas Calendar
- HAC for grades



Organizational Strategies cont....

- Have a binder to help organize. It can be a binder for each class, one bigger binder with dividers for each class.
- You can also get a hole puncher to place in the binder to better organize their work.
- folders with pockets for each class.
- Accordion style folder



Organizational Strategies cont....

Keeping track of assignments can be difficult, you can use the following to make it easier.

- You can use a planner
- Canvas Calendar
- Sync Canvas Calendar to phone – instructions on [website](#)



Thank you for coming!

*Questions? Please see either of
us after the presentation.*

Have a great evening!