

## **Benainu: Teenage Brain Email to Parents**

Dear Parents,

This week our 6<sup>th</sup> grade participated in the *Teenage Brain* portion of Benainu. Mrs. Finkelstein along with Mrs. Hervitz gave an overview of the brain. There was a focus on brain changes during puberty and adolescence and how the changes affect stress and mood, and how to manage.

### General Facts:

- The brain is actively growing during adolescence through young adulthood... almost as active as during early childhood.
- Because the brain is still developing, adolescence need adult support and guidance in decision making.

### The Brain

- The students learned about the parts and functions of the brain through an interactive activity where the kids wore some interesting props (ask your kids about it!).

### The Brain As It Relates to Puberty and Stress

- The Cerebrum and the Hypothalamus were highlighted, as these are the control centers for thinking and feeling respectively.
- The Hypothalamus functions: hormones and emotions. This part of the brain goes through many changes during adolescence (raging hormones). Middle schoolers will experience many of the following mood changes: feeling dramatic, irrational, lonely, sad, angry, longing for independence, thinking they are the center of the universe, question what is happening to them, wondering who they are, social worries, and more. We discussed the normalcy of these feelings, but also that middle schoolers should also feel happy, calm, connected, and confident at times through adolescence.
- The Cerebrum functions: storage, thinking, *planning*, *problem solving*, imagining, *decision making*. This is not fully developed until mid 20s, and therefore poses difficulties for children in this age range (our middle schoolers!)
- Mrs. Finkelstein discussed the connection between the Cerebrum (thinking part of the brain) and the Hypothalamus (the emotional part of the brain) > When we are flooded with emotions, the thinking part of the brain is shut down! In order to get the thinking part of or brain working again, we have to calm down. And should use adult support.
- Mrs. Finkelstein created a wonderful packet- please ask your children to share it with you.

### Discussion Questions-

- How will you know when you've calmed down enough to really think through a situation or problem?
- How can you strengthen certain parts of your brain?
- How do you think your brain relates to your body when it comes to feelings?

Looking forward to your children's continued growth in the Benainu program.

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