

# Why Do Teenagers Act Crazy?





# ADOLESCENCE:

## The Foundation for Adulthood

- Adolescence is the onset of puberty and identity formation
- Brain development between 10-18 is referred to as Explosive Growth
- Adolescence is a Pivotal Life Stage

Summation: During early adolescence individuals form their concepts of self that persist into adulthood, thus having a long-term impact.



# Brain Development During Adolescence

Simple/Concrete.....Abstract Thinking

- The teen-age years are a time information is learned more quickly than any other time except the pre school years.
- Performing well on tests may make them look more mature than they are.



# Brain Development During Adolescence

Adolescents primarily operate from the 'emotional brain' (amygdala). Brain circuit for processing fear occurs in the amygdala, creating anxiety.

- Snap decisions
- Emotions easily triggered
- Strong emotions: annoyance, anger, aggression
- Jump to conclusions, blame others



# Brain Development During Adolescence

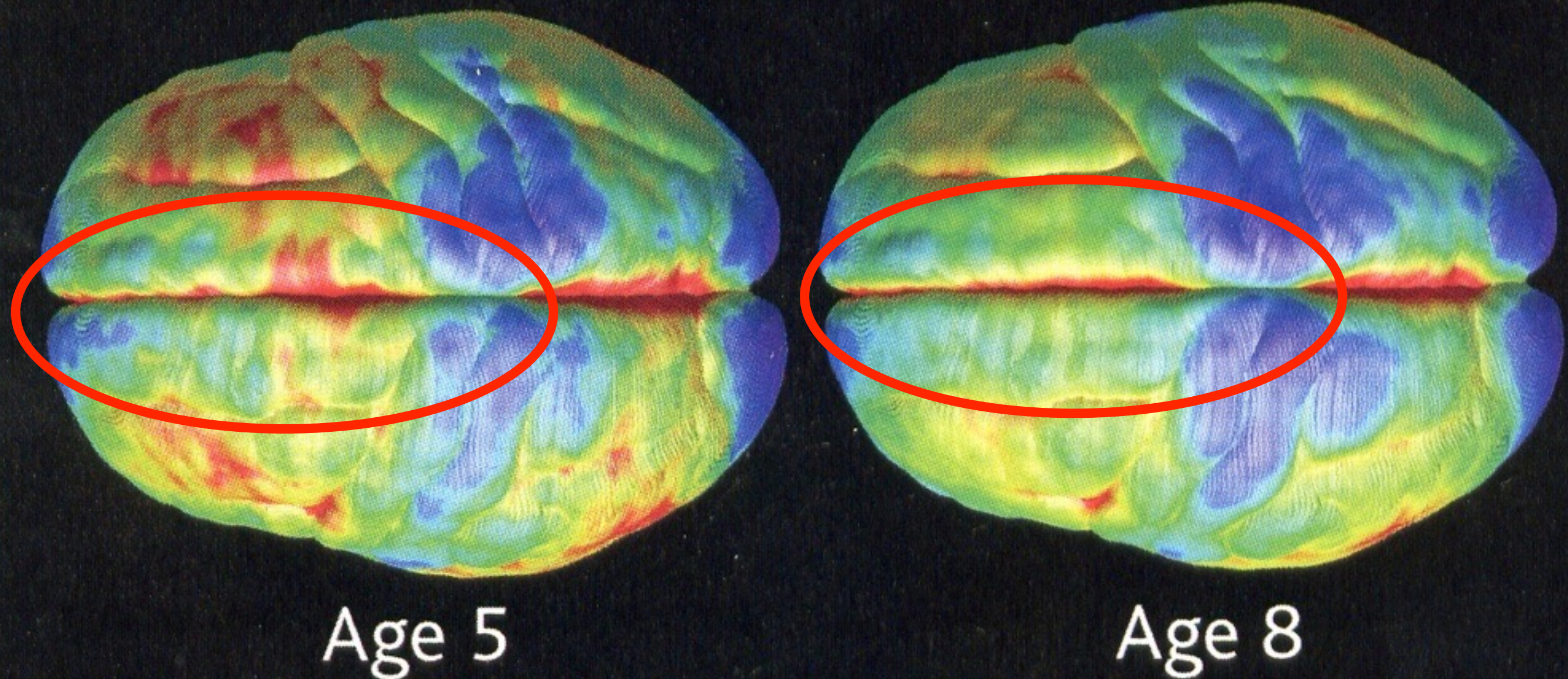
Pre frontal cortex of brain continues to develop and does not mature until the end of adolescence. The pre frontal cortex is the seat of reasoning and executive control. Therefore:

- During adolescence enhanced capacity for fear and anxiety
- Poor judgement
- Lack of impulse control
- Poor ability to modulate moods
- Young adolescents process verbal and non verbal cues differently than adults



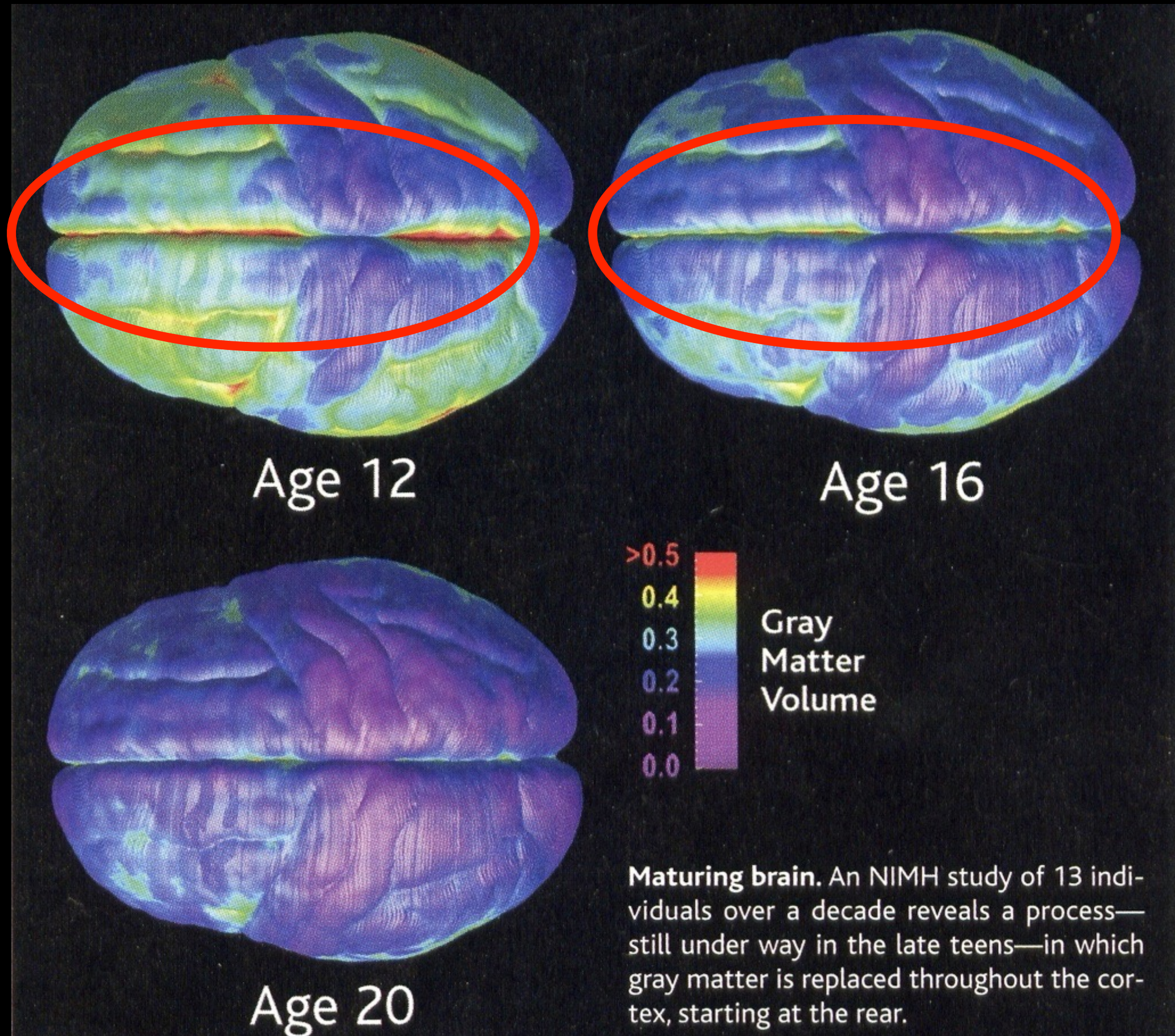
# Brain Development During Age 5 - 8

## Normal Brain Development





# Normal Brain Development During Adolescence





# Brain Development During Adolescence

- Scientists think that the development of sex hormones during puberty creates a tinderbox of emotions





# 3 Stages of Adolescence

## Early Stage of Adolescence

### Development 11-13

- Self-Centered
- Argumentative
- Perceptive
- Motivation Geared Toward Immediate Rewards
- Peers/Friends Very Important



# 3 Stages of Adolescence

## Middle Stage of Adolescence Development 14-16

- Individuation/More Control
- Sexual/Cognitive/Moral Maturation
- Lots of Time Invested in Physical Appearance
- Developing a Specialization



# New Research

- Scientists now claim a surge during the teenage years in anxiety and fearfulness. Largely due to a quirk of brain development, adolescents on average experience more anxiety and fear and have a harder time learning how not to be afraid than either children or adults.



# What We Have Known

- Developmentally, teenagers face a number of social and emotional challenges, like starting to separate from their parents, getting accepted into a peer group and figuring out who they really are, anxiety-provoking transitions



# Five Critical Needs of Adolescents

- Need to feel Respected.
- Need to feel Important
- Need to feel Accepted
- Need to feel Included
- Need to feel Secure



# What is Needed to Develop Independence ?

- Experience Consequences
- Learn to Make Good Decisions
- Learn to Problem Solve
- Develop Creativity
- Become Self-Advocates
- Take risks - they are compelled to do so
- Each teen is unique and challenging, and each teen wants to be successful



# How Do Parents Help ?

- Accept the STAGE of Development
- Feel Connected
- Provide Guidance/Clear Limits
- Let Them Face Consequences & Learn
- Encourage reasonable risks
- They will be figuring this all out even after college. Maturity does not mean any of us have all the answers. We need to trust we can figure it out, and we need practice and a safe place to discover the answers.



GOOD NEWS !

80% of young  
people do not  
experience a stressful  
adolescence...



