



the
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project

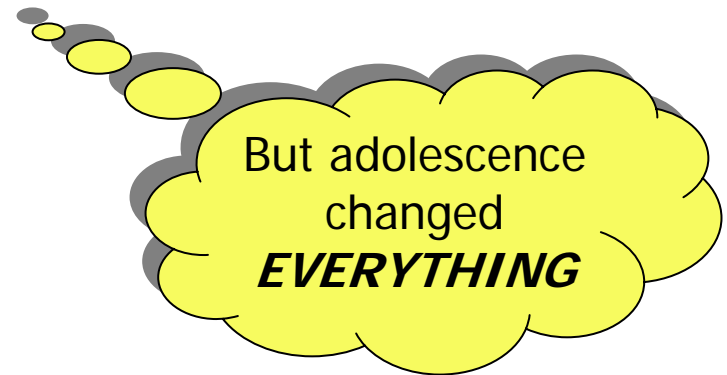
Dr. Charisse Nixon

Penn State Erie and The
Ophelia Project

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“Teenagers are people who express a burning desire to be *different* by dressing exactly alike.”

Anonymous



Adolescence

"Begins at puberty and ends..."

sometime.

What are they?

Adults?



Children?

What do we expect?

How do we treat them?

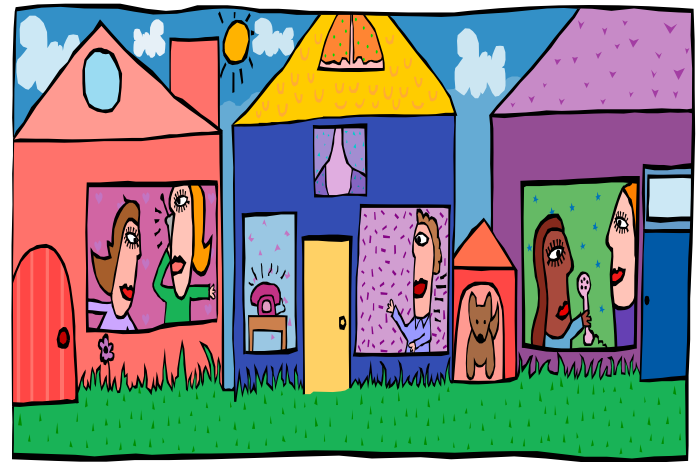


“Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders come into the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.”

Culture

- ❖ A loss of community
- ❖ Extended family are far away
- ❖ Age
- ❖ The media influence

The “standard”

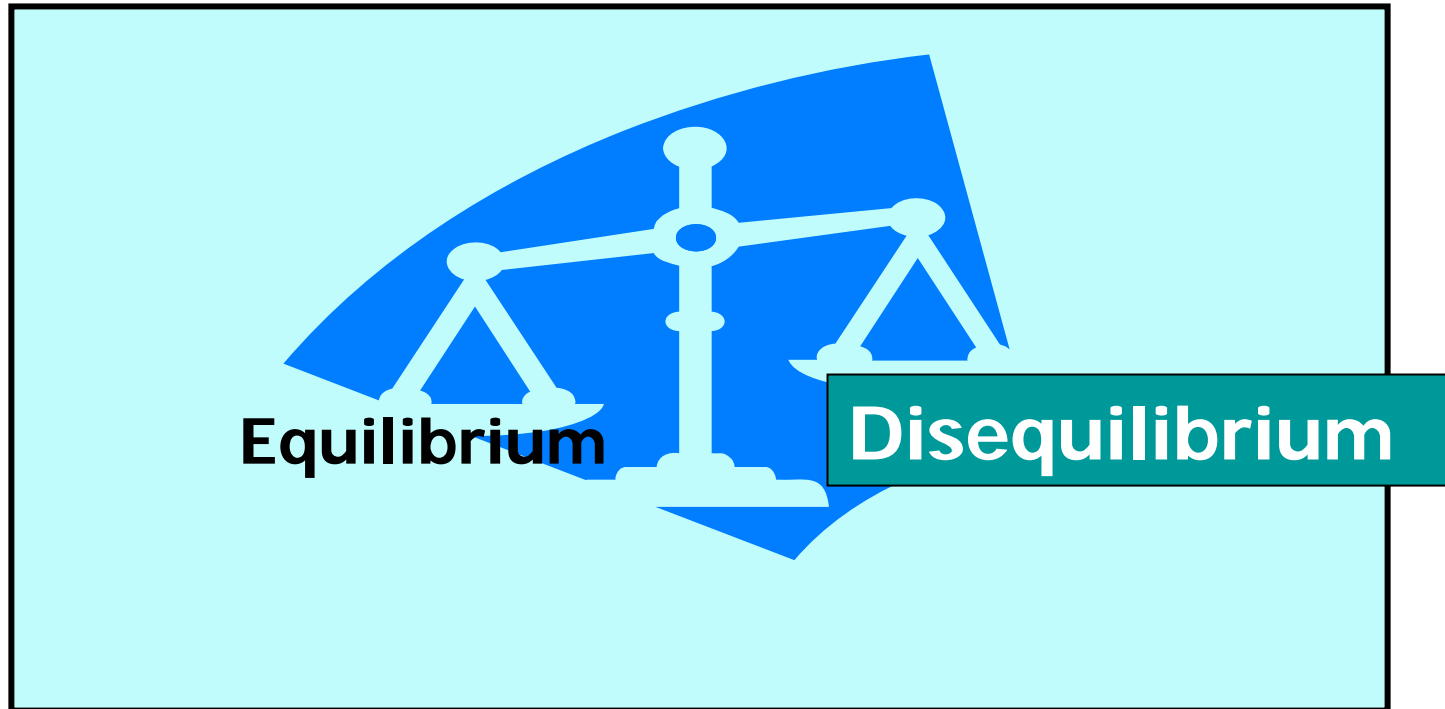


Teens are under great social pressure
to get as *far away* from their
families as possible....



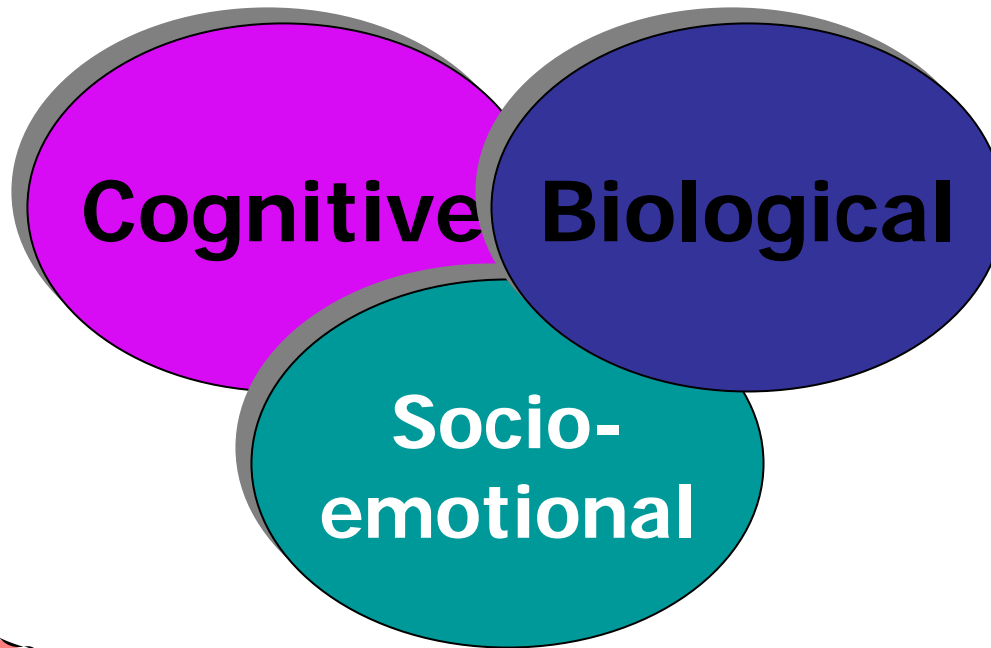
BUT....

Adolescence is about balance...

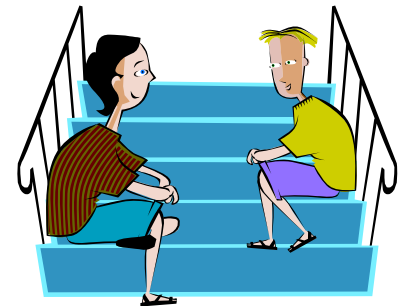


Goal: To create a *new* equilibrium

What changes the “family system”?

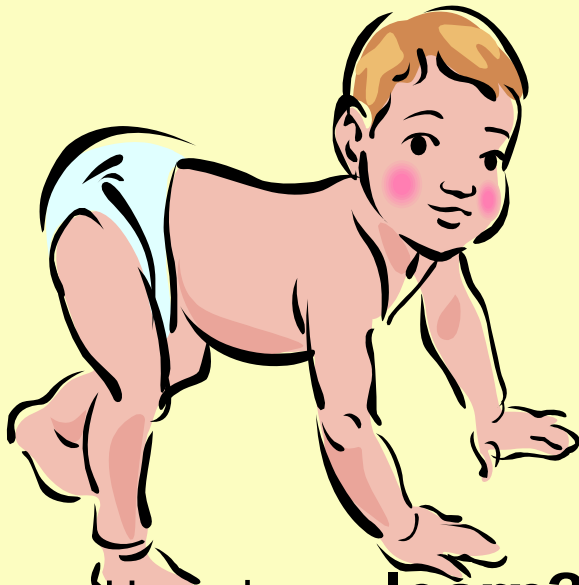


“Where does the “disequilibrium”
Come from?”



Growth – SOCIAL Selves

Toddlers “ Terrible 2’s”



How do we **learn?**

Adolescents



Learn by?

Volatile, unpredictable, mood swings; infatuation with the word “NO”

Adolescent Thinking



- ❖ Imaginary audience
- ❖ Categorize everything – concrete
- ❖ Personal fable
- ❖ Overgeneralizations – 1 Case
- ❖ Metacognition – Recursive thinking

The Brain Experience



The neurons that wire together
fire together.

Hubel & Wiesel 1981



**Use it or lose it
phenomenon**

Sutured the eyelids of newborn kittens...

What does our PFC do?

Shrinks!

- ❖ It is our CEO!
- ❖ The “rational part of our brain”
- ❖ Used to read emotions
- ❖ Controls our impulses



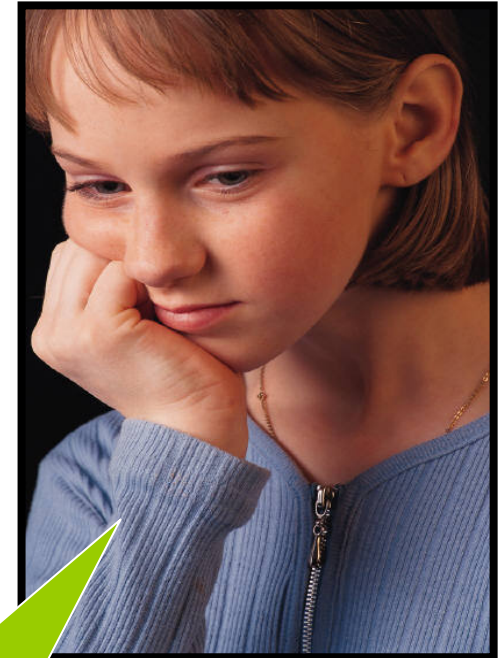
Prefrontal Cortex

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The Amygdala

- ❖ Our “gut level” response system
- ❖ Used to read others’ feelings
- ❖ Seat for **FEAR & ANGER**
- ❖ Most *active part*
- ❖ **REACTS FIRST** and Questions later



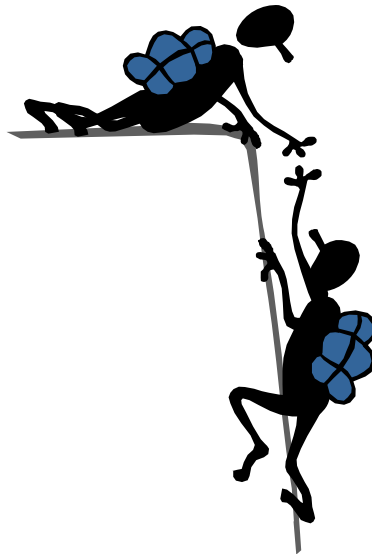
Why are you
always mad at
me?

Let's summarize...

- ❖ **Likely to misread emotions** (even though they think they know exactly what happened)
- ❖ **Response from amygdala is likely to be EMOTIONAL & NOT rational**
- ❖ **Brakes are on back order...**

What do adolescents need?

We are their surrogate PFC!!!



Challenge for Adolescent Girls...

- ❖ Come to terms with biological changes of puberty
- ❖ Physical change occurs in a cultural context that upholds a **female beauty ideal of extreme thinness**



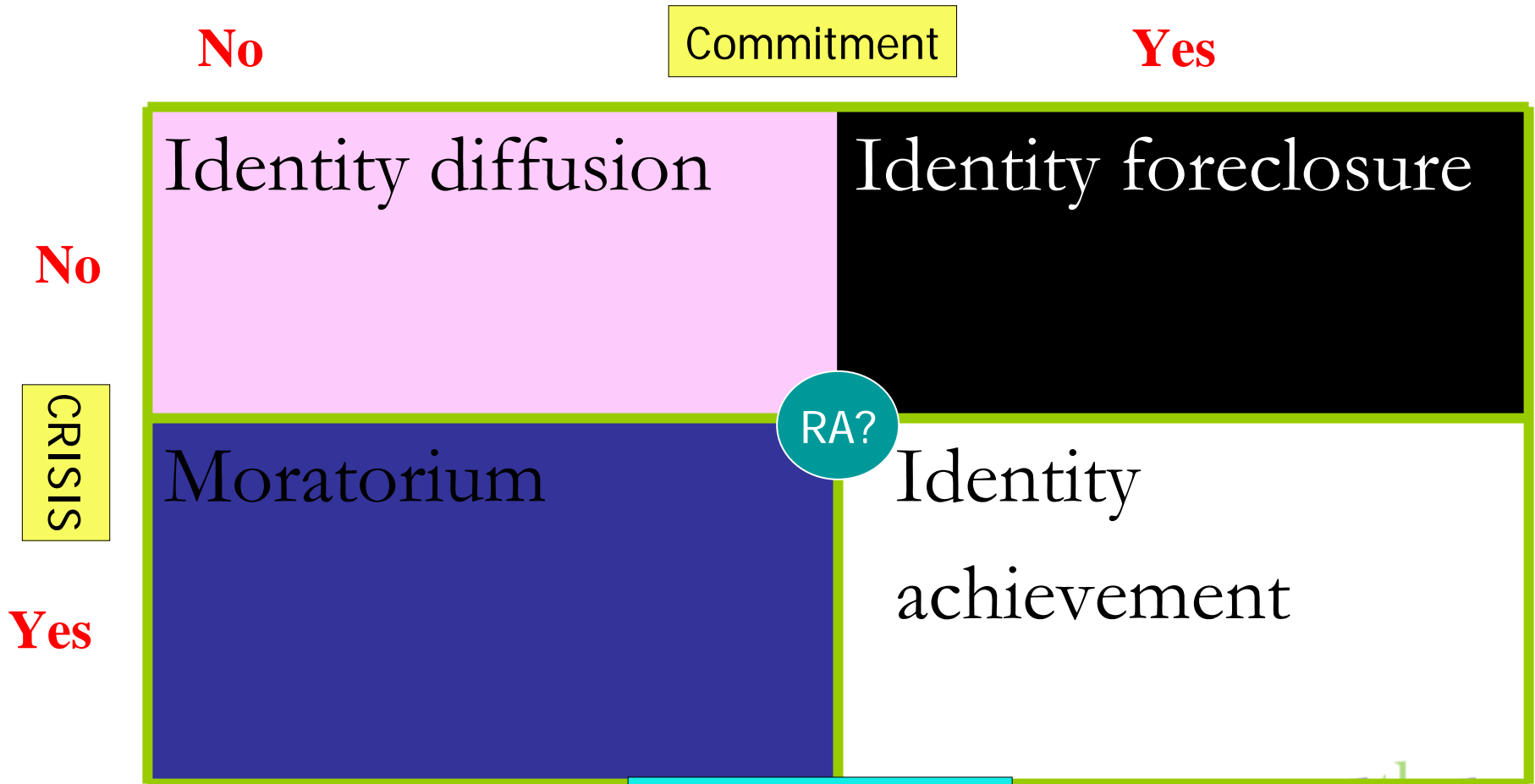
Identity



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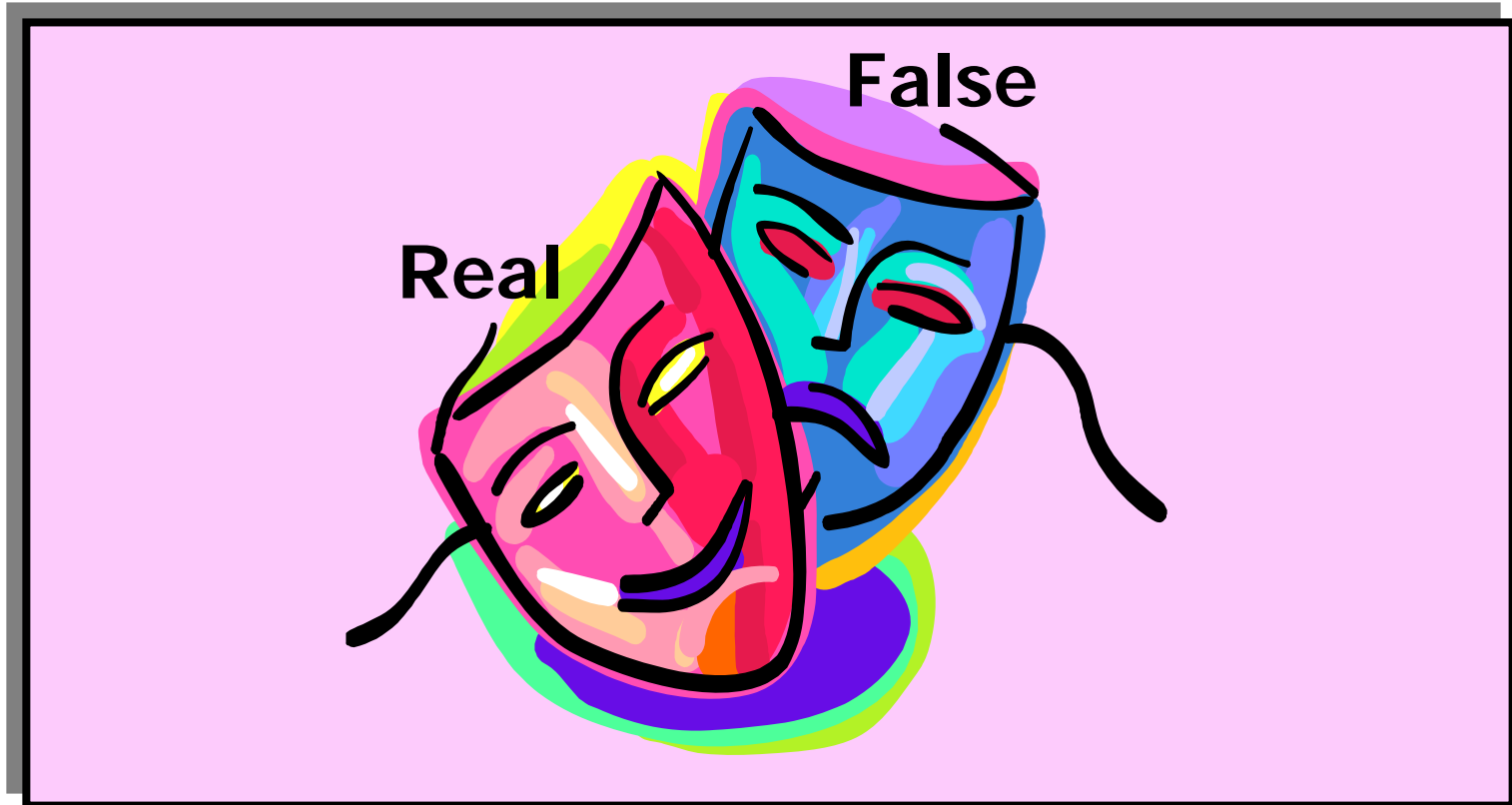
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Commitment & Crisis



MAMA cycles

The Mask...



So...what can we DO?

Protective Factors

- ❖ Caring adult
- ❖ **Connectedness**
- ❖ Service-related activities

Mentoring

Empathy



**Change
our
perspective!**

Give them a New...

Does there have to
be an **enemy**?

Perspective

HAB

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Teach the Language

The Power of...

Words

Step #2

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Construction or Demolition Site?



Model behavior

Review how words should be used.



Beliefs are connected

to your WORDS

**We carry our beliefs into
our daily interactions.**





Modeling



S
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3

Mentors

Strategies

- ❖ Educate around adolescent develop.
- ❖ Be very specific about expectations.
- ❖ Promote the use of their PFC!
- ❖ Check labeling of emotions – prone to miscommunication.
- ❖ Stick to one issue at a time.
- ❖ Emphasize the power of their CHOICE.