

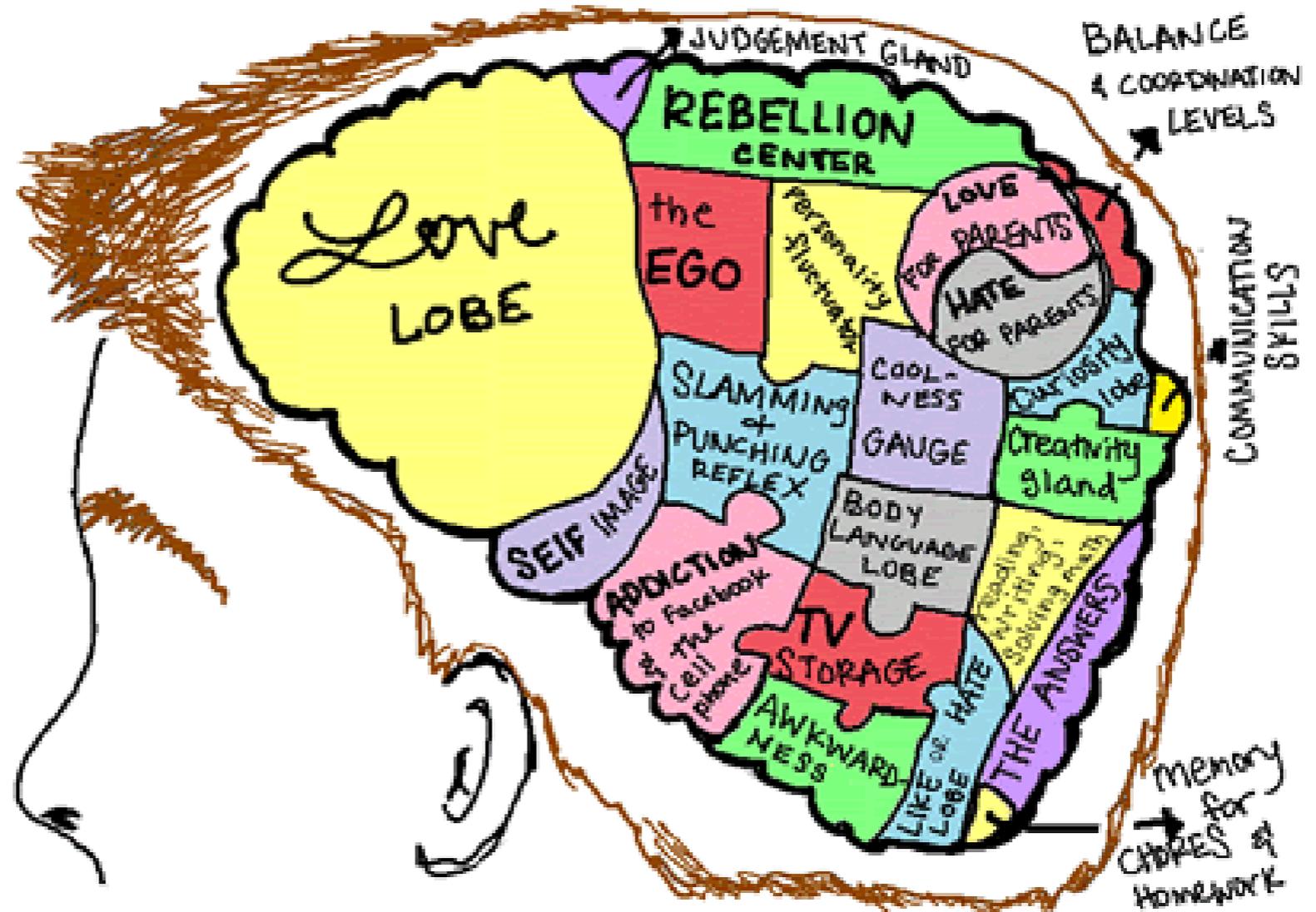
South Wilts Grammar School

# When do teenage problems become “Problems”?

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THE  
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**SALISBURY**  
PRACTICE

# THE AVERAGE TEENAGE BRAIN



- Do you remember being a teenager?
- What were some of the dilemmas you faced?

# Dilemmas

physical changes

drink/drugs



eating difficulties

anxiety

school pressures

low mood

self harm

body image

peer relationships

Poor self esteem

# What is normal?



- Emotional and psychological difficulties are not black and white - on a continuum
- It is normal for mood and behaviours to fluctuate, this is particularly the case for young people going through adolescence.
- Stressful periods - around exam times, break up from relationships, changes in peer relationships, changes within the family - changing role within the family which results in a renegotiation of the roles, communication and dynamics in the family.
- Experimenting - with freedom and autonomy, possibly alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, relationship with authoritative figures.

# Eating difficulties...

Some difficulties we see in young people ...

- Anorexia
- Bulimia
- Binge Eating
- Body Dysmorphia



# Things to look out for...



- Has there been significant change in weight?, increase?, decrease?
- Has there been a change in eating habits - has this change **lasted or more three months?**
- Have you noticed any other changes - mood? behaviour? increased exercise/activity withdrawn? eating patterns? wearing covering clothes? increased preoccupation with weight? sleep difficulties? weighing self constantly? vomiting? hiding food? hoarding food? stealing food?

# Self harm...

- Can be cutting, typically with razors, glass, sharp objects
- Ingesting items - tablets, noxious substances
- Alcohol and drugs
- Risky behaviours



# Things to look out for...



- Changes in behaviour have lasted three or more months.
- You see cuts - often on arms, wrists, top of legs and stomach area.
- You find evidence of cutting - i.e. sharp objects in bedroom, blood on the bed sheets, blooded tissues, hoarding of tablets - typically paracetamol.
- Changes in behaviour - wearing covering clothes, withdrawn, pervasive low mood, anxiety, suspicious behaviour, peer changes.

# Mood Disorders

- Depression
- Poor self esteem
- Poor self confidence
- Anxiety - social anxiety, phobias, nightmares, obsessive behaviours



# Things to look out for...



- Changes have lasted three or more months.
- Behavioural changes; increased anxiety, agitation, withdrawn, social isolated, obsessions, sleeping problems, changes at school.
- Avoidance of things they used to do - avoiding social contact, school refusal, not participating in the way they used to - for example; fear of contamination - avoiding specific places due to concerns around contamination, increased washing, ritualistic behaviours.
- Does not derive as much enjoyment out of life in the way they used to.

# If you have concerns...



- It can be difficult to notice how long behaviour changes have lasted - keep a short diary of behaviours, changes, can you identify any triggers - such as *'is this happening around exam time or is it happening all of the time? Is the behaviour sustained?*
- Is the behaviour normal? Are other teenagers doing it?
- Try to keep the lines of communication open with your child. If you have noticed changes try to open conversations or facilitate opportunities for them to talk to you or somebody they feel comfortable talk with.
- Try to avoid being too punitive if you notice behaviour that is concerning you - such as if your child comes home drunk, is refusing to go to school, not eating properly. Where possible try to talk to you child and find out what is going on.
- Are there other factors that could be causing your child stress or worry other than normative pressures such as school.
- Go to your GP if you have any concerns.

# When might a Clinical Psychologist become involved?

- Referral from GP
- Self referral
- Evidence based therapies and assessment:
  - Psycho education
  - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
  - Dialectical Behavioural Therapy
- Aim to increase understanding of difficulties and gain awareness of unhelpful cycles
- Develop more helpful coping strategies to manage stress, low mood, eating difficulties

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