

WIRED

WE'RE TEACHING THIS

How many hours are you technologically connected on a normal day? If you were to add up your hours online, your glances at text messages, your streaming music, your perusing social media, your Netflix addiction, how many hours could you count? It's probably a lot. Our culture is obsessed with technology—and with good reason. Technology keeps us connected to each other and to the world around us. Nearly every device we own transmits signals to something else, somewhere else. Why? Because that's how they're wired to function. Our phones, tablets, smart watches, gaming

systems—they all are wired to connect to something outside them.

And the same is true for us. We are wired for connection. It's in our design. As we take a closer look at what Jesus called "the greatest commandment", we discover that we were wired to have three vital relationships: with God, with ourselves, and with others. And when those connections are made, everything else begins to function as it was designed to.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Your student is changing fast. Chances are this isn't a surprise. Their classes are changing. Their friends are changing. Their bodies are definitely changing. But one change you may not see as quickly are the changes that are happening in your student's brain. As our students approach puberty, their brains are being physically rewired to function less like a child and more like an adult. New connections are forming. Old ones are collapsing. Parts of the brain are being reorganized. And with all of that activity, it's no surprise that they may experience occasional "outages" or glitches in their judgment, their memory, and their emotional control. That means...

your straight-A scholar may suddenly forget their homework.

your sweet, quiet child may now have teenage emotional outbursts.

your reasonable, responsible student may have a few mindboggling lapses in judgment.

When that happens, our first reaction may be to panic and wonder, *What went wrong here?* But, most of the time, nothing is really wrong. Our students' brains are simply under construction.

In their book, *Teen Stages*, authors Ken and Elizabeth Mellor describe this as a "cognitive rebirth" beginning around age 13 and continues into young adulthood. That means during middle school and high school, your student may show some

behaviors reminding you a lot of their toddler and early elementary years. And...it's perfectly normal.

While no two children are the same, and development is surely going to look different and take different amounts of time for each one, it may be helpful to look at the stages Mellor outlines to see where your student fits and what may be coming next.

As you check out the table below, find which descriptions best match your student and read to see what maybe coming in the next year. No matter what phase of rewiring your student is in, it's important to remember that it's only a phase. **Enjoy them exactly as they are today** and know that you play a key role, even during the later stages, in guiding them toward what's next.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

AGE	STAGE	WHAT YOUR CHILD MAY EXPERIENCE
13	The Baby Stage	Thirteen-year-olds experience increased child-like neediness (p. 85). Many things they previously understood very easily turn into unsolvable mysteries. Cause and effect no longer seem to exist. And they may go through times when they literally no longer understand, no longer remember, no longer have a sense of the previous week, day, hour, or even minute (p. 87).
14	The Dissenter Stage	(They) are reworking the two-year-old period. This is why so much of what they do seems so like the behavior of an angry toddler (p. 107). At the end of this stage, young people are considerably more at peace...by the time they get to fifteen, they can think fairly clearly, plan well, and act appropriately even when they feel passionate about things (p. 104).

THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

AGE	STAGE	WHAT YOUR CHILD MAY EXPERIENCE
15	The Fledgling Stage	This is one stage that most parents enjoy. It signals an end to the struggles, and it is a period of learning and curiosity about the world... Many aspects of this stage involve bonding with the adult world: fifteen-year-olds are ripe for this and our job is to ensure that we and other adults are available so they can bond with us (p. 123.)
16	The Sweet and Sour Stage	Sixteen-year-olds start to challenge again, at home particularly. Through much of the year, they struggle with taking personal responsibility for themselves. With our persistence, they gradually soften and come to terms with their actual capacities and responsibilities. Our part is to learn to act with more detachment (p. 143).
17	The Romantic Stage	Exercising responsibility for themselves is central. They organize themselves, make plans, and follow through on them, are increasingly considerate and sensitive to others, and fulfill their household and other duties. As they do, they learn the benefits and the consequences of taking personal responsibility. The increased autonomy of our seventeen-year-olds results in many wonderful ways of having fun. This is often a happy time, so many options open up naturally (pp. 164-165).
18+	The World Leader Stage	A desire to contribute to the world is very important. They generally do want to make a difference. They are understandably preoccupied with the practicalities of finishing school or getting on at work. Parents may now seem somewhat irrelevant emotionally as these young people start to commit to other people outside the family. Continuing as friendly consultants works particularly well if we cultivate respect for their privacy and their interests (p183).

TRY THIS

Sometimes the scariest thing about our students' wiring is that it comes from us. It's tempting to focus all our attention on the traits in our students that make us cringe—especially when we know they learned it from us. But those aren't the only traits we've passed down. If you think about it, there are also some pretty great things in your students' wiring that came from you.

This week, **take notice of one positive trait in your student that they inherited from you.** (This can be something you can do as a step parent, adoptive parent or foster parent

as well. Genetics may be responsible for some traits, but observation and learned behavior play an important role, too!)

Maybe you're both good at math. Maybe your son is starting to show some of your great conversational skills. Or maybe your daughter is wired to be competitive, just like you. No matter what it is, pay attention to the positive traits passed on to your student. Then, tear off the section below. Fill it out and leave it somewhere for your student this week.

----- **TEAR HERE** -----

DEAR

ONE THING I'VE NOTICED ABOUT YOU LATELY IS THAT YOU'RE...

THAT'S A GREAT TRAIT TO HAVE AND IT'S ONE THAT HAS HELPED ME OVER AND OVER. I'M PROUD OF THE PERSON YOU'RE BECOMING.

LOVE,