

# Teaching Adolescents

SINGLE SESSION – Facilitation Guide



ACTIVE LEARNING  
FOCUS



FEEDBACK  
FOCUS

## RESOURCES

- [Teaching Adolescents](#) (Google Slides)
- [Teaching Adolescents: Thought Catcher](#) (Google Doc)

## SESSION PREP

### SESSION GOALS

After you lead this session, participants will be able to use knowledge of the teenage brain and community building strategies to build a positive classroom community.

### HOW TO PREPARE

1. Preview the session activities that follow. Preview the resources listed above. Take note of any additions or changes you would like to make.
2. Make a copy of the [Teaching Adolescents](#) Google Slides. Edit for your needs. Preview all video clips and ensure you have sound capabilities to show them in the session to the whole group.



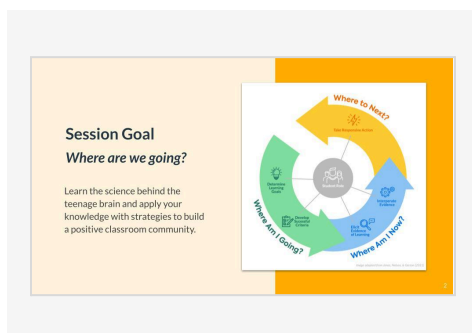
### TIME CRUNCH

If time for this session is limited, you may choose to skip the video clips on Slides 4-7 and Slide 15, or only watch some of them.

3. Make a copy of the [Teaching Adolescents: Thought Catcher](#) Google document. Edit for your needs.
4. Ask participants to bring their devices with them for individual and cooperative work during the session.
5. Optional: Print copies of the articles participants will read during this session:
  - [Why Teens Should Understand Their Own Brains \(And Why Their Teachers Should, Too!\)](#)
  - [Why You Shouldn't "Build Community"](#)
  - [6 Strategies for Building Better Student Relationships](#)

## SESSION FRAMEWORK

### Slide 2



**Session Goal**  
*Where are we going?*

Learn the science behind the teenage brain and apply your knowledge with strategies to build a positive classroom community.

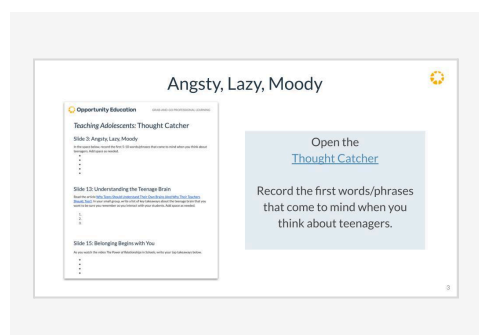


### FEEDBACK FOCUS

**SAY:** *Where are we going?*

Share session goal. Have students find a partner sitting next to them to work with during the session.

### Slide 3



**Angry, Lazy, Moody**

Open the  
**Thought Catcher**

Record the first words/phrases that come to mind when you think about teenagers.

**SAY:** *Open your thought catchers and make a copy to your personal drive. Write the first words/phrases that come to mind when you think about teenagers. Don't think too long, just write what you think of first.*

*Building relationships is key to teaching teenagers. Before you can truly form strong student teacher relationships though, you need to get to know your students. Whether you think so or not, the media, your own upbringing, and your own interactions with teenagers (whether positive or negative) have shaped your views of teenagers.*

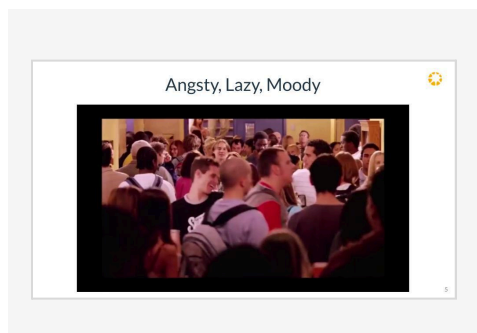
*We are going to watch four film clips. As you watch them, think about how these clips portray teens.*



### TIME CRUNCH

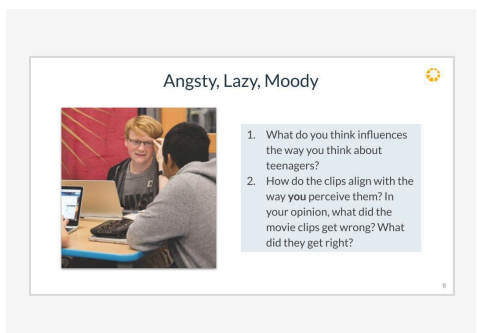
If time for this session is limited, watch only 1-2 movie clips or move straight to slide 8 without watching the video clips.

## Slides 4-7



Watch the movie clips as a whole group. Save any discussion until the clips are done.

## Slides 8



### REFLECTION

Allow time for participants to reflect on the following questions individually. Then facilitate a group discussion and allow time for participants to share their thoughts with the group.

- What do you think influences the way you think about teenagers?
- How do the movie clips align with the way you perceive teenagers? In your opinion, what do the movie clips get wrong? What do they get right?

## Slides 9-10

**The Power of Connection**

To develop strong relationships with adolescents, we may have to reframe any negative preconceived notions or past experiences. Our perceptions of teens affect how we respond to them in the moment and color our interactions with them.

Consider this:

- Can students learn from you if they don't like you?
- Can students learn from you if they don't have a positive relationship with you?

**SAY:** *To develop strong relationships with adolescents, we may have to reframe any negative preconceived notions or past experiences. We may not even realize the way our perceptions of teens affect how we respond to them in the moment or how it can color our interactions with them.*

**Consider this:**

- *Can students learn from you if they don't like you?*
- *Can students learn from you if they don't have a positive relationship with you?*


Allow a short time for individual reflection on these questions, then watch the TedTalk as a whole group.

## Slide 11

**The Power of Connection**

How would Rita Pierson answer?

- Can students learn from you if they don't like you?
- Can students learn from you if they don't have a positive relationship with you?



Lead a discussion about the TedTalk using the same framing questions posed before watching, but from Rita Pierson's point of view.

**SAY:** *How would Rita Pierson answer?*

- *Can students learn from you if they don't like you?*
- *Can students learn from you if they don't have a positive relationship with you?*

*Do you agree with her? Take a moment to reflect on your own before turning to your partner and sharing your thoughts.*

If time allows, lead a group discussion after participants have had time to share with their partners.

## Slide 12

### Understanding the Teenage Brain

So, if relationships are so important, and possibly the foundation of all learning, how do you build them?

You start by understanding the teenage brain and, depending on your own biases, shifting the way you view the teenage brain.

For example, what you may have initially viewed as immaturity may actually be a fantastic neurological flexibility that allows your students to explore and take risks.

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**SAY:** *So, if relationships are so important, and possibly the foundation of all learning, how do you build them?*

*You start by understanding the teenage brain and, depending on your own biases, shifting the way you view teenage behaviors.*

*For example, what you may have initially viewed as immaturity may actually be a fantastic neurological flexibility that allows your students to explore and take risks.*

## Slide 13

### Understanding the Teenage Brain

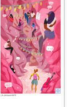
**Why Teens Should Understand Their Own Brains (And Why Their Teachers Should, Too!)**

By [Name]

Research shows that a teen's brain is still developing, with changes in the way it processes information, and that changes in the way it processes information are still ongoing. This means that teens are still developing, and that changes in the way they process information are still ongoing. This means that teens are still developing, and that changes in the way they process information are still ongoing.

Read the article with your small group. Prepare a list of key takeaways about the teenage brain in your thought catcher.

Be prepared to share with the larger group.



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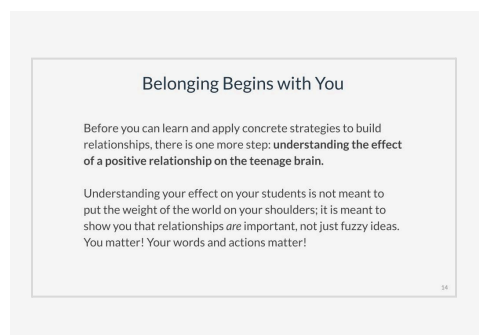


### ACTIVE LEARNING

Ask participants to form a small group by joining with another partner pair around them and read the article, [Why Teens Should Understand Their Own Brains \(And Why Their Teachers Should, Too!\)](#) Each group should prepare a list of key takeaways about the teenage brain in their thought catchers.

Once small groups have discussed, allow time for each group to share their takeaways with the whole group.

## Slides 14-15



*SAY: Before you can learn and apply concrete strategies to build relationships, there is one more step: understanding the effect of a positive relationship on the teenage brain.*

*Understanding your effect on your students is not meant to put the weight of the world on your shoulders; it is meant to show you that relationships are important, not just fuzzy ideas. You matter! Your words and actions matter!*

*We are going to watch a video about building positive relationships. Record your top takeaways in your thought catcher. You will have an opportunity to share and discuss after.*

Watch the video and have participants share their thoughts and takeaways with their partner when done.



### TIME CRUNCH

If time for this session is limited, move straight to the articles on slide 16 without watching the video.



### DIFFERENTIATE

Inform participants that the article [Building Positive Relationships With Students: What Brain Science Says](#) is linked in the thought catcher for those who want to take a deeper dive after the session. Participants can add their top takeaways to this section of their thought catchers.

## Slide 16

**SAY:** Now you're ready to dive into some concrete strategies to use to build those strong relationships in the classroom.

First, review the "Building Classroom Community" note taking document in your thought catcher. The document includes example community building goals, with space for you to write down strategies and implementation ideas for each goal. Add rows with your own goals as needed. Organizing your notes in this way allows you to evaluate strategies for value and effectiveness.

With your group, read the two articles [Why You Shouldn't Build Community](#) and [6 Strategies for Building Better Student Relationships](#) and add at least 2 strategies to your organizer. You can add more later.

## Slide 17

**SAY:** Building healthy, respectful relationships with students is an effort that needs to stretch beyond the walls of your classroom. Whether it's sending parent emails with good news (not just bad behavior) or going to your students' soccer games or band concerts, engaging with parents and the broader school community can have an enormous impact on the interactions you have with students during class.

## Slide 18

**Where Am I Now?**

- What questions do you have about building a positive classroom community?
- Did you find strategies to support building agreements and values, creating respectful environments, or developing communication plans?
- What community building strategies/goals did you add to your organizer?



### FEEDBACK FOCUS

Lead participants through a discussion of their progress toward the session goals. Allow time for participants to ask questions and share their own ideas.

Where Am I Now?

- What questions do you have about building a positive classroom community?
- Did you find strategies to support building agreements and values, creating respectful environments, or developing communication plans?
- What community building strategies/goals did you add to your organizer?

## Slide 19

**Where to Next?**  
How can you implement one of the strategies you identified in your Classroom Community organizer?

Write a plan for implementing your strategy. Share it for feedback before you leave.



### FEEDBACK FOCUS

Where to Next?



### TANGIBLE TAKEAWAY

**SAY:** *How can you implement one of the strategies you identified in your classroom community organizer?*

*Write a plan for implementing your strategy. Share your plan with \_\_\_\_\_ (another teacher, department lead, facilitator, etc.) for feedback before you leave.*

Get more resources like this at [www.opportunityeducation.org/resources](http://www.opportunityeducation.org/resources)