

Dear Families/Caregivers,

Emotions give meaning to our lives. They drive our feelings, thoughts, behaviors, decisions, and sense of self.

We have been learning about how emotions affect our bodies and impact our lives. Some examples of how emotions affect the body include increased heartrate, rapid breathing, blushing, sweating, butterflies in the stomach, sweaty palms, tense muscles, and nausea. All of these are natural responses to emotions and are part of being human. We are still learning about how emotions affect our brains. We know that adolescent brains are more sensitive to emotional stress, that the amygdala is the part of our brain that responds to emotional situations, and that our teen brains are still developing our prefrontal cortex, which is the part of the brain that helps manage emotions and helps us make choices.

Here are some things that you can do with your teen at home:

- Compare and discuss how your adult emotional responses differ from your teens' emotional responses in different situations.
- Talk with your teen about how different people react differently to different situations. For example, when some teens are stressed about a test, they avoid studying; whereas other teens who are stressed about the same test may study excessively. Help your teen understand strategies that work well for him or her to deal with his or her emotions.

Emotions are an important part of understanding ourselves and others. Help your teen to understand, accept, and regulate his or her emotions by providing a model of emotional maturity.