

## CARON GAN TALKS ABOUT WORKING WITH ADOLESCENTS

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### Caron Gan

Well, first of all adolescence is a tough stage of life regardless of whether or not there is a brain injury and there are reasons for that. A lot of it has to do with the fact that the adolescent brain is not fully developed and a lot of people don't know that. So adolescence is a time when the brain is going through major, major changes. The brain matures from the back to the front so the last part of the brain to mature is the frontal lobes or the prefrontal cortex, which is involved in emotional control, judgment, planning, organization, making good decisions, and these are some of the things that we often see in adolescents.

They may be impulsive, they may be quick to react, they may engage in risk taking behavior, and that's because their brains are not fully matured and that's why we're seeing that. Now you add a brain injury on top of that it makes it really complex for families because then families don't know is this brain injury or is this adolescence? So part of what we have to do is to help families figure out strategies that incorporate the fact that, you know, they do have an adolescent whose brain is maturing and not fully developed yet, but at the same time there may be brain injury really that changes that they can learn some strategies that will help to make their lives a little bit easier.