14.6: Wisdom and Risk-Taking

Whether it is a sense heightened of ability (we’ve learned a lot about the egocentrism, personal fable, imaginary audience, or the lack of development of prefrontal cortex), or just poor decision making, many teens tend to take unnecessary risks. **Wisdom**, or the capacity for insight and judgment that is developed through experience, increases between the ages of 14 and 25 and increases with maturity, life experiences, and cognitive development. Wisdom increases gradually and is not the same as intelligence, and adolescents do not improve substantially on IQ tests since their scores are relative to others in their age group, as everyone matures at approximately the same rate. Adolescents must be monitored because they are more likely to take risks than adults. The behavioral decision-making theory proposes that adolescents and adults both weigh the potential rewards and consequences of an action. However, adolescents seem to give more weight to rewards, particularly social rewards, than do adults. Scaffolding adolescents until they show consistent and appropriate judgment will likely allow for fewer negative consequences. 33

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