

How to Build New Paths of Engagement with Foster Youth

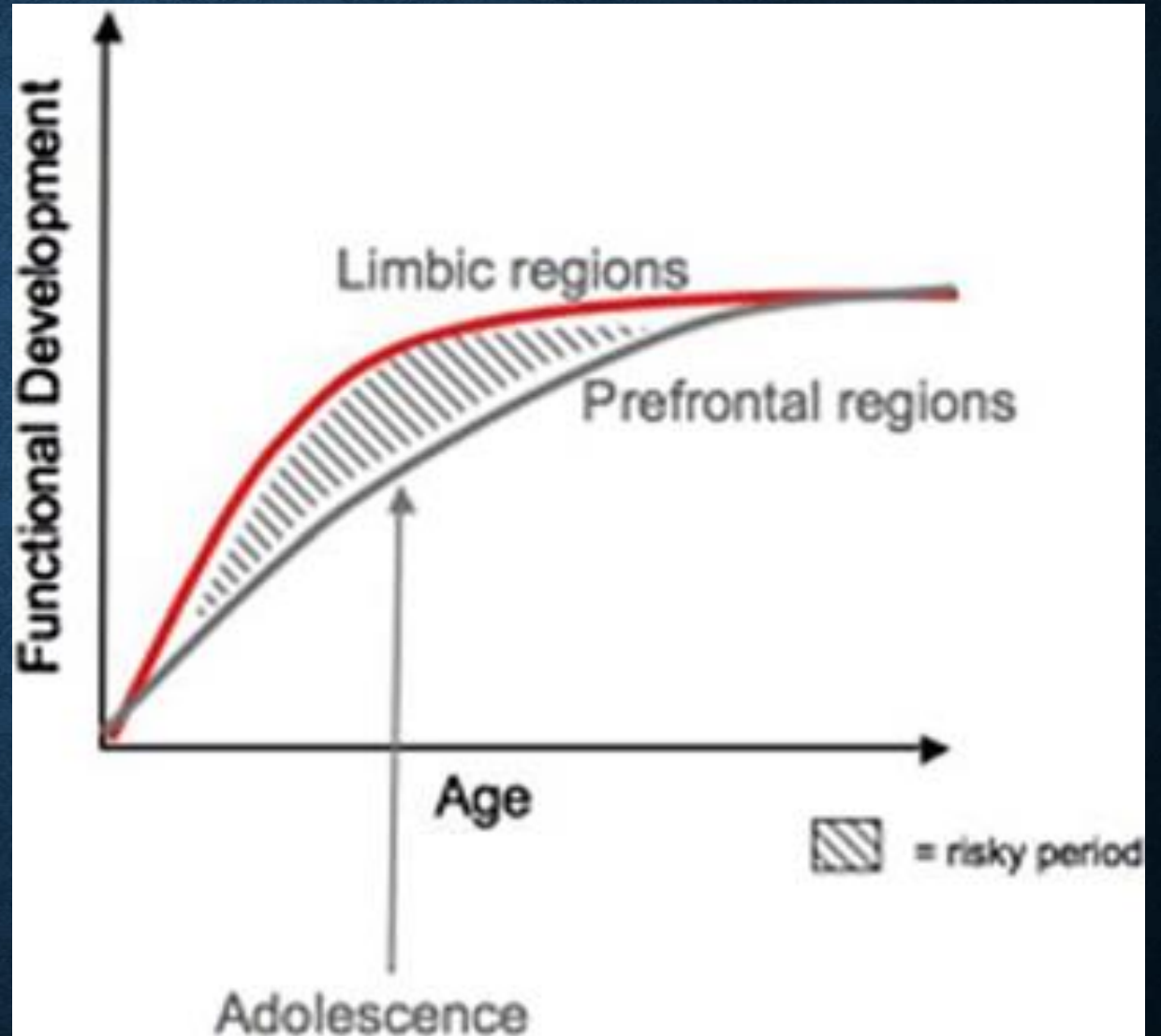
Presenter: J. Curtis Witt

What I want to do with you today is share the wide-angle view of this approach to teen engagement, by first discussing the makeup of the teenage brain, then digging into the framework of coaching methodology and then finally talking about adaptations you will need to make in order to effectively use these tools.

Brain development over the first 21 years of life is slowly moving from the back of the human brain to the front.

The very last places to connect being the frontal lobes.

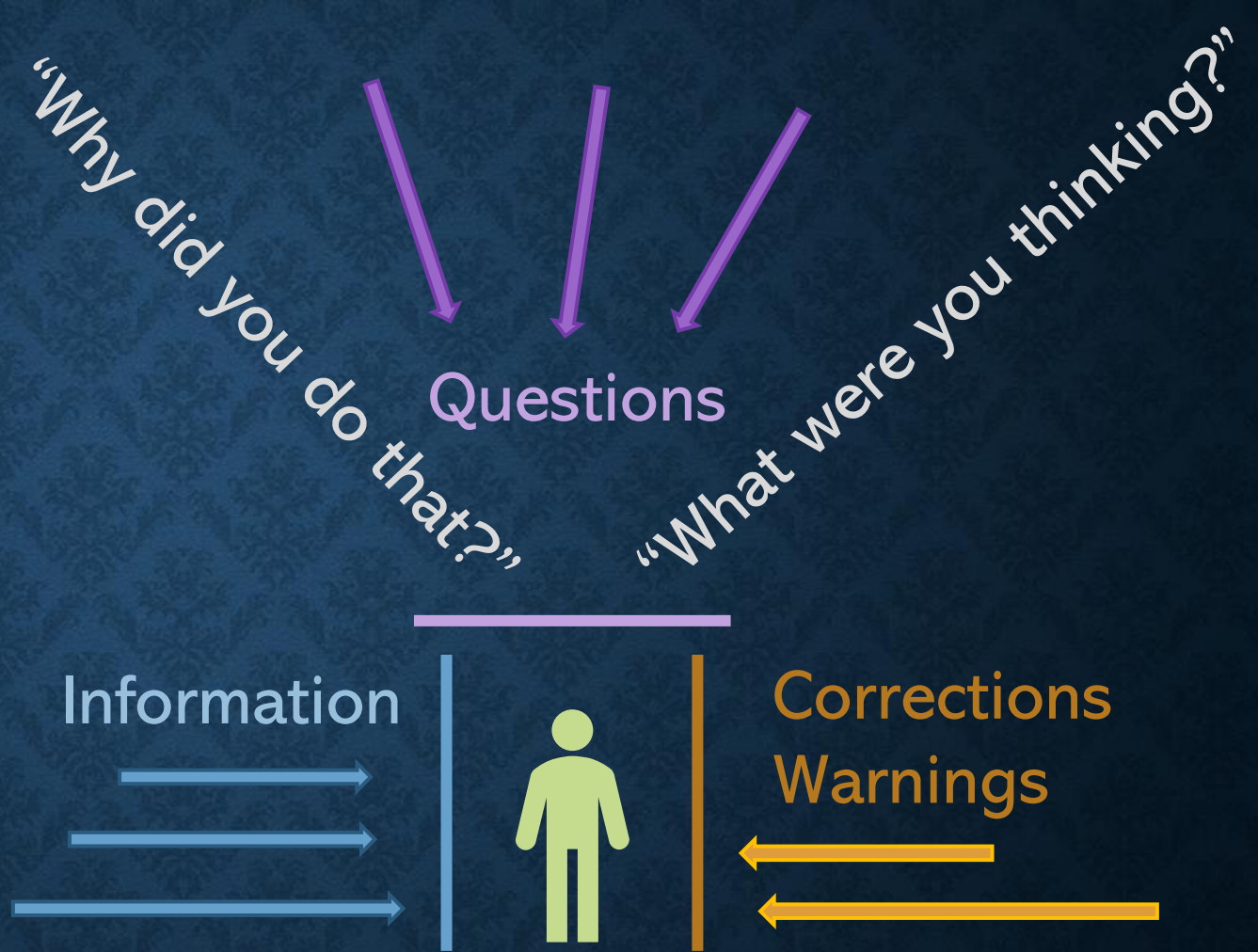
The connection between the limbic center which is the emotional seat of the brain is slowly connecting to the prefrontal cortex which is the rational seat.



WHY WON'T YOU LET

ME HELP YOU?!

Judgment, demands,
exasperated explanations
and accusing questions all
tend to ignite their
emotional center,
producing feelings of
worthlessness on one
extreme and anger on the
other.



“Adolescents start to have the computational and decision-making skills of an adult – if given time and access to information, but in the heat of the moment, their decision-making can be overly influenced by emotions...”

- Sheryl Feinstein, Inside the Teenage Brain

Coaching Frameworks - Creating Space

One of the greatest gifts coaching offers to teenagers is the gift of time and space.

Shifting hats/roles: “I want to have a different kind of conversation with you.”

We have recently started calling them “Open-World Conversations”

Coaching Frameworks - Asking questions no one else is asking them and that they are not considering themselves

Coaching questions sit in this dark, unfrequented space in a teen's brain.

Instinctive Elaboration



Coaching Questions Promote:

- Self and situational awareness
- Exploration of intention and options
- Insight to understand personal strengths and values
- Identification of restrictions to forward movement
- Connecting cause and effect chains
- Building empathy
- Creating action steps
- Ownership

4. What does your intuition tell you about this?
11. And what else? (The AWE question)
14. So, you said you can't do _____, is there something between here and there that you could do now?
19. What are you willing to do to improve this situation?
21. Who do you need to become in order to succeed here?
23. Which one of your choices would help you the most in the soonest amount of time?

Coaching Frameworks - Seeing, Being and Acting

Seeing: Helping teens explore the landscape of their situations and relationships.

We usually prepare for conversations by getting clear on what we want to say or address. (coming with an agenda)

Coaching shifts that orientation to think through: What must this be like for them? What will be the most difficult thing for her to talk about? What is he experiencing?

- But don't assume the answers – Be curious!

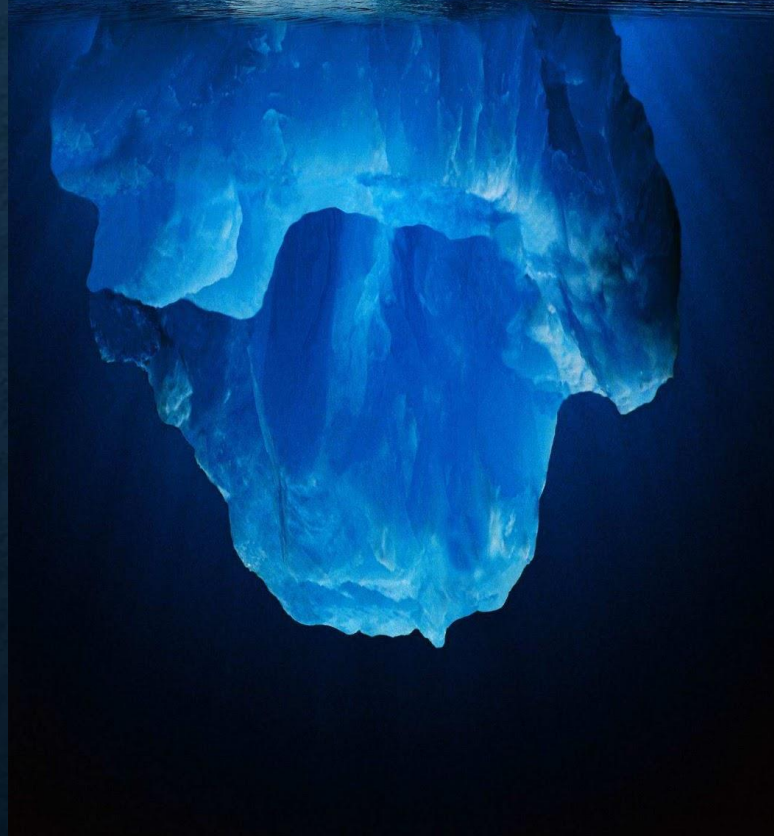
Coaching Frameworks - Seeing, Being and Acting

Being: Helping teens understand the person they are or who they will need to be in their situations and relationships.

Doing



Being



Behavior



Values



Beliefs



Assumptions



Worldview

Coaching Frameworks - Seeing, Being and Acting

Acting: Helping teens design doable steps that will create positive movement and affirming experiences.

Benefits of coaching for at-risk youth:

- Empowerment**
- Scaling goals or problems to smaller, doable steps**
- Non-judgmental support from a mentor-coach**
- True feelings of partnership in problem-solving**
- Entrusted with the capacity to think and choose well**

Developing a coaching perspective

- **Keep the teaching and advising in check.**
- **Stay present – listen carefully, set aside your agenda and refuse to lead them where you think they should go.**
- **Trust the coaching process to bring that teen to places of self-discovery. Be patient with this youth that is struggling toward adulthood.**

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