

Adolescence as an important period for social-affective engagement: A view from neuroimaging studies

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Adolescence is well known as a natural time for explorative learning, risk taking and sensation seeking. Brain imaging studies support a model of heightened reward sensitivity in mid-adolescence, which may explain certain adolescent specific vulnerabilities. However, the same neural responses that have previously been interpreted as adolescent specific vulnerabilities, such as increases in risk taking, may also provide opportunities for social learning, such as fast adaptation to different social contexts, forming friendships and close relationships and prosocial development. In this talk I will present a) how social reward sensitivity predicts risk taking and social-affective engagement, and b) results from longitudinal neuroimaging studies which are useful for understanding how individual trajectories predict future prosocial outcomes.