

MODULE 50 PARENTS, PEERS, AND EARLY EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- Nurture starts in the womb, then continues outside the womb where our early experiences foster brain development.
- Our genes dictate our overall brain architecture, but experience fills in the details, developing neural connections and preparing our brain for thought and language and other later experiences.
- Like the idea of plasticity, our neural tissue is ever changing and new neurons are born. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable to push stimulation within the brain. Use it or lose it.

HOW MUCH CREDIT OR BLAME DO PARENTS DESERVE?

- The power of the family environment also appears in the remarkable academic and vocational successes of children of people who fled from Vietnam and Cambodia. With personality measures, parents show little shaping in the ability to mold their children into a certain light.

PEER INFLUENCE

- According to Howard Gardner (p. 511), "Parents are more important when it comes to education, discipline, responsibility, orderliness, charitableness, and ways of interacting with authority figures. Peers are more important for learning cooperation, for finding the road to popularity, for inventing styles of interaction among people of the same age."
- The power that parents have to select a child's neighborhood and schools gives parents an ability to influence the culture that shapes the child's peer group.

BE ABLE TO ANSWER: to predict whether a teenager smokes, ask how many of the teen's friends smoke. One explanation for this correlation is peer influence. What's another?

PRACTICE FRQ: Compare and contrast the influence parents and peers have on a child's development, giving one example for each.