

## TROUBLING TOPICS FOR TEENS AND TWENTIES

Lynn Paul, PhD  
Fuller Graduate School of Psychology

### I. ACC and Adolescence

- Around age 12 and through adolescence, the corpus callosum of typical children becomes more efficient and effective – this results in the greater complexity of thought, emotion, and relationship that becomes possible during our teen years
- When the corpus callosum is absent or malformed, it is possible that a child who has been developmentally “typical” may begin to lag behind as his or her peers increasingly depend on their corpus callosums
- Or if a child with a callosal disorder has been somewhat delayed, the increased social expectations of teenagers may make the child’s delays even more obvious

### II. Key Issues for Older Children and Adolescents

#### A. Social adjustment

- Complex – must read others’ cues and recognize unstated social rules
- Subtle – appropriate behavior is learned through social interactions and is much more nuanced than in younger years
- Due to difficulty reading others’ intentions, may be susceptible to bullies or to being manipulated

#### B. Emotional Modulation

- May have greater moodiness, periods of sadness and negative attitudes
- As they become further behind their peers, teens with ACC may be more frustrated

#### C. Self-awareness

- Typically, at this age people become very self-aware, both of their internal reality and of their social status
- However, individuals with ACC are often lacking in self-awareness and thus may be confused about why they are having social difficulty

#### D. Sexual Development

- In general individuals with ACC seem to develop typically regarding sexual function
- However, the tendency toward social inappropriateness and lack of reading social cues may result in conflict situations

#### E. Independent living skills

- Teens with ACC may be less cooperative and willing to follow instructions but also less independent than expected for age level
- They may compare themselves with peers and feel badly that they cannot attain the same level of independence (on the other hand, they may be so lacking in insight that they try to act more independent activities than they can handle)

#### F. Complex Cognitive Understanding – “why?”

- In order to compensate for difficulty understanding complexities, an individual with ACC may develop a rule-bound morality with limited insight
- They may also become dogmatically attached to particular issues or areas of knowledge

### III. How to help them

#### A. Be Explicit

- When explaining a social situation or giving guidance about appropriate behavior, be explicit about the details
  - They are likely to take your statements literally
  - Use their rigid thinking to your advantage ...
- B. Focus on Life Skills
- In addition to academic training, individuals with ACC may need repeated, detailed and explicit instruction on daily life activities such as laundry, money management, and time management (patience is key here!!)
- C. Be Patient
- Individuals with ACC may seem to have an extended adolescence – but that also means they continue to learn new life skills well into their 20s!

#### IV. Discussion Topics

- A. Friendships
- B. Sexuality
- C. Money
- D. Living Situations
- E. Independence
- F. Legal Concerns
- G. Getting Services
- H. SAFETY