



Growing and nurturing relationships for life



## PEER INFLUENCE: ADOLESCENT RISK TAKERS

Research shows that young adolescents are highly attuned to social risks, which often affects their decisions. In this film, neuroscientist Sarah-Jayne Blakemore explains the science of peer-influence and a group of adolescents give their own perspective on the risky business of being a teenager.

### See

- **What is happening?**  
Teenagers share some experience/insights. Often teenagers are stereotyped negatively.
- **Who are the people involved?**  
Everyone, and teenagers in particular.
- **Who gains from this situation? Who loses?**  
Nobody gains... until an individual decides to offer assistance.
- **What is the situation doing to people?**  
Risk taking, and in particular with driving: the difference when teenagers are with others, and on their own...
- **Why is it happening? Why does it continue?**  
The power and fear of exclusion-teenagers are hyper-sensitive to this.

### Judge

- **How do you feel about this situation?**  
As a parent/adult, I can be both understanding from experience, and concerned when teenagers take life-threatening risks.
- **Have you ever behaved or acted like anyone in the situation? If so, what happened? Why? How did you and/or those involved feel?**  
As an adult, I can identify with the behaviour and experience. I have experienced acceptance and rejection from others, and know how difficult this can be.
- **What do you think should be happening?**  
Can I strike a balance of support and care for my teenager, alongside understanding the facts of development and neuroscience, all the while maintaining non-negotiable boundaries designed to maximise safety?
- **What does our faith say about it?**  
'So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1: 27) Every person is created in love, with free will, and forgiven when poor or selfish choices are made, people acknowledge their choice and seek forgiveness.

### Act

- **What can we do to bridge the gap between what is happening (the reality) and what should be happening (the ideal/what our faith says)?**  
Assist my teenager to navigate the ups and downs, the acceptance and rejection that comes with friendship. Listen to them and offer unconditional love-the love we enjoy in, from and with God. Explore whether there are options to be involved in supportive communities, including Parish youth groups.
- **What action are we going to take?**  
As an adult, engage with my teenager to help them better understand the process of brain development. Bring facts and empathy, not judgement.
- **Who can we involve in our action?**  
The research from Larry Steinberg and others. Knowing the presence of friends/peers can or will change risky choices. Parent/carers of my teenagers friends-try to be connected with them, know who they are.... Together form the 'village' required to raise/form a child, a teenager, an adult....