

## WHEN I'M 13: Assessing Children's Preference

---

Mindy F. Mitnick, Ed.M., M.A.  
5100 Eden Avenue Suite 122  
Edina, MN 55436  
(952) 927-5111

MITNICK '10

## PARENTS' VIEWS

---

- Balanced?
- Self-focused?
- Realistic?
- Extreme?

MITNICK '10


## BEING HEARD VS. GETTING TO PICK

---

- There is no research that tells us which option children, in general, really want.
- There is no simple way to know what any individual child really wants.
- Who benefits?
- At what price?

MITNICK '10

There is no magic age!



MITNICK '10

## ASSESSING ABILITY

---

- Cognitive maturity
  - IQ + school performance
  - Functional intelligence
- Emotional maturity
  - EQ
  - Emotional stability
- Quality of other decisions child has made
- Voluntariness

MITNICK '10


---

"Capabilities develop with age and experience, and they also fluctuate over time and across contexts and domains."

Fischer et al., American Psychologist, October 2009

MITNICK '10

## LISTENING FOR THEMES



MITNICK '10

## ATTUNEMENT

- "My \_\_\_ never listens."
- "My \_\_\_ really understands me."
- "My \_\_\_ and I have never been that close."

MITNICK '10

## ALIGNMENT

- "My \_\_\_ and I have the same interests."
- "It's just easier with my \_\_\_. He/she is a boy/girl."
- "I love my \_\_\_, but my \_\_\_ helps me more."

MITNICK '10

## EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCE

- "My \_\_\_ just gets this sad face when we leave."
- "My \_\_\_ just misses us more."
- "My \_\_\_ has a boyfriend/girlfriend, but my \_\_\_ doesn't have anyone."
- "My \_\_\_ says we have so little time, I shouldn't be with my friends."

MITNICK '10

## PRESSURE

- "I want that 50/50 thing."
- "If I live with my \_\_\_, I can get a dog"and his name is lucky."
- "When I'm 13, I get to decide"

MITNICK '10

## ANGER & CONTROL

- "If you make me live with my \_\_\_, I'll run away."
- "My \_\_\_ threw the remote."
- "I don't want my \_\_\_ to get upset."
- "My \_\_\_ can't make me go."

MITNICK '10

## NEGLECT

- "My \_\_\_ say he/she will help with my homework, but then he/she doesn't."
- "My \_\_\_ just sleeps and sleeps."
- "My \_\_\_ said he/she is depressed, so we have to do more."
- "My mom said it isn't safe for me to sit in the front seat of the car, but my dad makes me."

MITNICK '10

## ABUSE

- Witnessing
  - "My dad pushed my mom down and said I was going with him."
  - "My mom put my brother in the dog kennel."
- Experiencing
  - "My grandpa took pictures of me."
  - "My mom slapped me and her boyfriend threw me up against the wall."

MITNICK '10

## NEGATIVE EMPOWERMENT

- What other decisions does parent allow child to make?
  - Age appropriate?
  - Developmentally appropriate?
- Is preference an isolated instance?

MITNICK '10

## THIRD PARTY INFORMATION

- Direct
  - E.g., collaterals report what child says, does
- Indirect
  - E.g., What child writes in school journal

MITNICK '10

## PREFERENCE ISN'T STAGNANT

- What factors might affect a change in preference?
- How soon?

MITNICK '10

## HOW YOUNG CHILDREN THINK

- **Thinking is egocentric**
  - Child cannot take viewpoint of others
  - Child does not realize others' thoughts, information, ideas are different from her own
  - Child assumes you know what she knows

MITNICK '10

## HOW PREADOLESCENTS THINK

- **Thinking is concrete**
  - Child interprets questions literally
  - Child only answers question you ask

MITNICK '10



## HOW PREADOLESCENTS THINK

- **Thinking is not hypothetical**
  - Child has limited ability to think about the future
  - Child has limited ability to do "what if"
  - Child cannot imagine schedules

MITNICK '10

## HOW PREADOLESCENTS THINK

- **Thinking remains self-focused**
  - Children hear "why" as blame
  - Children assume responsibility for events
  - Child may not really understand cause and effect

MITNICK '10

## HOW ADOLESCENTS THINK

- Teens believe they know all
- Teens avoid admitting they don't know something
- Teens often think adults are "stupid"



MITNICK '10

## HOW ADOLESCENTS THINK

- Lack common sense
- Are rigid
- Use all or none thinking
- Seem disorganized
- Apply more emotion and seem more irrational

MITNICK '10

### HOW ADOLESCENTS THINK

- Argue for the sake of arguing
- Are self-centered
- Are overly dramatic

MITNICK '10

### WHAT SHOULD DEVELOP

- Abstract reasoning
- Ability to analyze situations logically
- Moral reasoning
- Ability to entertain hypothetical situations

MITNICK '10

### HOW ADOLESCENTS REASON

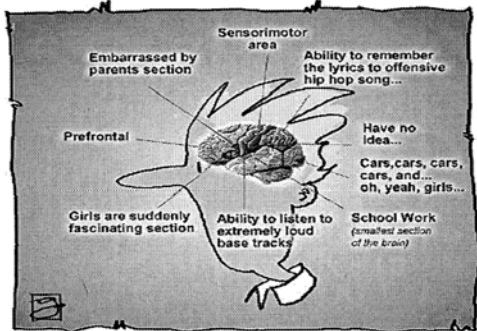
- Adolescents differ from adults in
  - Considering different or fewer options
  - Identifying consequences to the options
  - Generating and using less information
  - Determining importance of info they use
  - Underestimating probability of negative consequences

MITNICK '10

### HOW ADOLESCENTS REASON

- They focus less on protection from loss and more on expectation of gain
- They focus on short term payoff vs. long-term gain
- Have hard time conceptualizing the distant future

MITNICK '10



**Anatomy of a Teenager's Brain**

### RISK TAKING

- Younger teens less capable than older teens in imagining risky consequences
- Younger adols are more prone to agree with perceived authority figures
- Kids conform to what they peers want and what they believe peers are doing
- Teens overestimate their ability to manage situations

MITNICK '10

## PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Continues into young adulthood
  - Impulsivity
  - Sensation seeking
  - Future orientation
  - Susceptibility to peer pressure

MITNICK '10

## PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Lags behind cognitive development
  - Information processing
  - Logical reasoning

MITNICK '10

## DECISION-MAKING

- Adolescents do best
  - In unhurried situation
  - With input from adults
  - In low emotional arousal situations
  - When immediate rewards/costs are absent

MITNICK '10

## IMPLICATIONS

- Neither cognitive development nor psychosocial maturity are well-developed at 13.

MITNICK '10

