

# Thrive update



*Enhance Inspire*  
*Inform healthy kids make better learners*

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## >> Developing healthy self-esteem

In recent years, there has been a re-examination of how self-esteem develops in children. In the past we assumed that the more we praised our children the more positive they would feel about themselves, and the higher their self-esteem the better. More recent research has shown us that the way self-esteem develops is far more complex and, ideally, we want to avoid both low self-esteem and what is often referred to as inflated self-esteem.

A new series of studies in the journal Psychological Science (Brummelman, et al, 2014) focused on the idea of inflated praise, which results from unrealistically positive feedback. Their finding indicated that particularly for children with low self-esteem, inflated praise could have the opposite effect. In addition, they found that adults gave inflated praise twice as often to children with low self-esteem, compared to those with high self-esteem. For research purposes this difference could be seen by the addition of as little as one word, for example: "You're incredibly good at this" compared to "You're good at this." In another experiment, children were asked to draw a famous Van Gogh painting and then received inflated, non-inflated, and no praise from a "professional painter." They were then asked to draw another painting, choosing from one that was described as easy ("but you won't learn much") and another described as more difficult ("You might make many mistakes, but you'll definitely learn a lot too"). Children with low self-esteem that received inflated praise were more likely to choose the easy one, while those with high self-esteem were more likely to choose the difficult one after receiving inflated praise. According to the main author: "If you tell a child with low self-esteem that they did incredibly well, they may think they always need to do incredibly well."

This does not mean that praise is bad. In fact, we know that positive feedback is crucial in increasing desired behavior. What we now know is that our praise should be realistic and should focus not on the child but on the particular skills and abilities involved. And we still need to do a better job of increasing positive feedback (which takes effort) and decreasing negative feedback (which comes naturally).

by **Dr. Jan Hittelman**  
Licensed Psychologist

Learn specific strategies to strengthen your child's sense of self in a free webinar entitled: "5 Ways to Develop Healthy Self-Esteem in Your Child" on Wednesday, February 5 from Noon to 1 p.m.

To register for the interactive webinar, visit

**[www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com/free-webinars](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com/free-webinars)**.

Look for us on the web!  
[www.bvsd.org](http://www.bvsd.org)

# Have the Conversation!

## Teen brains: Are they wired for risk-taking?

Are teen brains wired for risk taking? The answer is yes, but it's not a simple yes. There are numerous studies referring to the detrimental impact of alcohol and other substances on the ongoing development and maturation of the adolescent brain. The developing brain also plays a role in risky behavior.

Research over the last several years has linked risk-taking behavior to changes in the brain. The adolescent brain is extra sensitive to reward signals when the payoff for risk is higher than expected. Researchers have identified a surge of activity in a region of the brain, the ventral striatum, when reality exceeds expectations with the increased response highest among 14-19 year olds. This surge of activity is related to the release of dopamine – with more dopamine teens are more likely to feel risky behavior is more rewarding, especially if it ends well, than children or adults. According to B.J. Casey of Cornell University, in the heat of the moment (even though a teen may know better) the brain's reward system will overpower the logical decision-making part of the brain. "It's like they're pulled toward it," explains Casey. Examples might include skateboarding down steps, taking a big jump on a bike, or sneaking out after curfew.



The presence of peers substantially increases risk-taking, especially when emotions are elevated. When peers are involved, the social rewards of a risky behavior may outweigh the consequences. For example, when experimenting with alcohol and substance use, the perceived potential pleasure in the moment may outweigh the possibility of getting in trouble and other more serious consequences.

However, the enhanced response to risk-taking doesn't mean that all teens will engage in dangerous behaviors or ignore risk.

### According to the 2011 Boulder Valley Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- 63 percent of high school students believe that one to two drinks of alcohol per day poses moderate to great risk, 90 percent believe cigarettes are risky and 47 percent believe marijuana is risky.
- The prevalence of high school students who have ever used more serious substances ranges from 3 percent for methamphetamine to 11 percent for ecstasy. While we should absolutely strive to have those numbers be as low as possible, it's also good to recognize that 90-97 percent of students have not tried more serious and potentially addictive substances.

### What does this mean for parents?

- Help your child learn to assess risk – Use movies or the news as tools to talk about behavior and consequences.
- Keep the lines of communication open – Share your values and let your children know that your job is to keep them safe
- Offer your teen a way out – If they are feeling uncomfortable or feeling pressured by peers to do something they don't want to do, let them know they can contact you to pick them up with no questions asked (at that time, at least).
- Encourage "safe" risk-taking – sports, performing arts, something that matches their passion and interests and provides that "rush."

Risk-taking is a reality for teens. Our job is to help them learn that positive risk-taking is necessary for them to explore their limits and boundaries on the path to becoming independent, self-reliant young adults.

by Leisha Conners Bauer  
Boulder County Healthy Youth Alliance



Andrew Tucker  
BVSD Director of Counseling Services  
and Student Engagement

## >> Legalization of marijuana and its impact on youth

Now that Colorado has become the first state in the country to legalize marijuana, it is more important than ever to educate our children about marijuana use. It is a common misperception on the part of youth to assume that because something is legal, it also means that it's safe.

This is part of the reason that we now are struggling with children taking prescribed medications from home medicine cabinets, experimenting with these very dangerous drugs, and developing serious substance abuse issues as a result. This is also true regarding youth perceptions of alcohol use. Talk to any high school teen and they will tell you of the frequent presence of alcohol at parties and the disturbing misperception that alcohol use is not dangerous. In fact, it is easy to make the argument that alcohol and tobacco are the two most dangerous drugs on the planet, yet both are legal.

As parents and educators, we need to have these broader conversations with youth regarding substance abuse issues and focus specifically on legal substances like alcohol, tobacco, prescription medication and marijuana. It IS also important to remind youth that alcohol and marijuana are legal only for persons over 21 and that this is due in part to the known negative effects of these drugs on adolescent brain development. We know, for example, that youth who engage in alcohol consumption before age 15 are five times more likely to become alcoholics. There is also increasing evidence, despite popular belief, that marijuana can be addictive.

The most important message to impart to our children is that ANY substance abuse ultimately has negative effects and that we are all better off without it. A key way that we can communicate this with our children is through our own behavior. Thus we need to do some self-examination and consider modeling healthy stress management that does not include self-medicating with alcohol, marijuana and other substances.

We are fortunate to also have a great local resource for youth where they can learn more about the effects of substance abuse in a very effective and engaging way through the Natural Highs program created by local therapist and certified addiction counselor Avani Dilger. Learn more about this great resource by visiting their website: [www.NaturalHighs.us](http://www.NaturalHighs.us).

### Additional Resources

In order to increase understanding among teachers and parents so that they are better equipped to educate youth, the Colorado Department of Education's Dropout Prevention and Engagement Office has produced educational materials on the negative consequences of youth marijuana use. The material includes a slide show with speaker notes that can be used as an individual tutorial or public presentation.

To download, visit [www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/resources](http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/resources).

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has created a webpage on marijuana that is geared toward teens but also good for parents:

[www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana-facts-teens/want-to-know-more-some-faqs-about-marijuana](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana-facts-teens/want-to-know-more-some-faqs-about-marijuana)

by Dr. Jan Hittelman  
Licensed Psychologist



*"Marijuana Facts for Teens,"  
available at [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)*

## >> BVSD Lifelong Learning

### For Kids:

Keep your kids moving this winter and spring with Lifelong Learning's "Active" after-school classes for grades K-5. Lifelong Learning offers:

- Kids Yoga
- Floor Hockey
- Gym Ventures
- Hip Hop Dance
- Indoor Basketball
- Indoor Soccer
- Indoor Lacrosse



Lifelong Learning is also offering its popular Horseplay class beginning Saturday April 12 for ages 8-12.

Keep your kids' minds active as well with our enriching classes in cooking, art, science, chess, languages, robotics, movie-making, writing, and LEGOs®.

And be on the lookout for our Summer Camp Catalog; it's full of opportunities for play, discovery and learning. Choose both half-day and full-day camps that your child will love. New camps this year include: outdoor skills, architecture for kids, and neo dance.

### For Teens:

For those of you with teenagers, the following classes will help your teens become responsible and successful adults:

- SAT Prep
- ACT Prep
- Driver's Ed

For more information, visit us at [www.bvsd.org/LLL](http://www.bvsd.org/LLL) or call 720-561-5968.

## >> Inspiring kids to be healthier

In Colorado, we consider ourselves to be a population of elite athletes, adventurers and health food aficionados. We've been called the fittest and slimmest state in the country, and we take pride in topping these lists.

However – and this is rarely mentioned in those glowing headlines – while Colorado adults are considered the leanest in the nation, the state's kids have fallen behind. Between 2003 and 2007, Colorado's childhood obesity ranking dropped from 3rd leanest to 23rd. And according to the Centers for Disease Control, between 2008 and 2011, obesity rates among low-income preschoolers declined in 19 of the 43 states that were studied. Sadly, Colorado was not one of them. In fact, it was one of just three states in which childhood obesity rates went up.

Admittedly, some recent data from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment showed the state's childhood obesity rates had dropped to about 8.4 percent in 2012. Many state and regional agencies and local organizations – like the Y – continue to work diligently to make a difference in the numbers.

But there is no quick fix.

Here are a few things to keep in mind. Real improvement will come from creating long-term changes to a child's lifestyle. It's about teaching them to love their bodies and have confidence in who they are. It's about teaching them at a young age that daily activity and nutrition are important. And it's about making fitness fun and illustrating how healthy food is delicious food.

### Tips From the YMCA of Boulder Valley

There's no need to get cold feet about spending a winter day outdoors. Here are some creative ideas to bring those principles into your home:

- Winter Baseball - Create small piles of snow to represent home and three bases. From the pitcher's mound toss snowballs at all the bases to see if you can hit each base in a row.
- Rolling and Rolling - Pair up for a contest to see which team can roll the biggest snow ball.
- Skating Fun - Go skating as a family and enjoy the time on the ice.

The YMCA of Boulder Valley supports the community through programs that focus on healthy living, youth development and social responsibility. Financial assistance is available.



## >>Calendar of classes & events

### FEBRUARY 2014

**Monday, Feb. 3, 7-7:30 p.m.**

#### **Cyber Bullying: How to Keep Your Child Safe**

Learn how you can prevent cyber bullying by empowering your child to stand-up for themselves and others.  
BVSD Ed Center Board Room, 6500 Arapahoe, Boulder

A Pathways to Parenting Success Presentation - Live! Join us live or watch on Comcast Ch22 or streamed on [www.BVSD.org](http://www.BVSD.org) [www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com)

**Tuesday, Feb. 4, 6:30-8 p.m.**

#### **Strategic Step-Parenting for Healthy Blended Families**

Meadows Branch Library, 4800 Baseline Road, Boulder

Discover effective ways to respond to the challenges of stepfamily life, while strengthening family relationships.  
A Pathways to Success Workshop – Free and open to the public.

[www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com)

**Wednesday, Feb. 5, Noon-1 p.m.**

#### **Five Ways to Develop Healthy Self-Esteem in Your Child**

A Pathways to Success Webinar Series

Learn how to help your child develop his/her most critical attribute - a positive sense of self.  
To register for free interactive webinars, visit

[www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com/free-webinars](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com/free-webinars)

**Thursday, Feb. 6, 7-8:30 p.m.**

#### **PEN Event – Breaking Barriers: Embracing Inclusion and Acceptance**

Manhattan Middle School, 290 Manhattan Drive, Boulder

A presentation by BVSD high schooler, Benjamin Tarasewicz, and a short theatre production by Manhattan students. Event is free and open to the public. Register at

[www.penbv.org/Manhattan](http://www.penbv.org/Manhattan). For more information, contact Trina Faatz at [shantrina@aol.com](mailto:shantrina@aol.com) or 720-312-3221.

**Monday, Feb. 10, 6:30-8 p.m.**

#### **The Art of Being a Father**

Mamie Doud Eisenhower Library, 3 Community Park Road, Broomfield

Learn about the important role fathers play and how fathers can connect more deeply with their children. A Pathways to Success Workshop – Free and open to the public.

[www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com)

**Wednesday, Feb. 12, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.**

#### **SEAC - Math Curriculum**

BVSD, 6500 Arapahoe Road, Boulder

Discuss issues, information and services for students with disabilities. Contact Anna Stewart at 720-561-5918 or [anna.stewart@bvsd.org](mailto:anna.stewart@bvsd.org) for more information. SEAC (Special Education Advisory Council) is a forum designed to bring together parents, staff, students and the community to support the education experience of BVSD students with disabilities.

**Friday, Feb. 14** – Teacher Prep Day – No school for BVSD students

**Monday, Feb. 17** – President's Day - No school for teachers and students - District offices closed

### THRIVEupdate for BVSD Parents

Published by BVSD  
Written by local experts  
and parents

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Look for us on the web!  
[www.bvsd.org](http://www.bvsd.org)

# >> Calendar of Classes & Events

**Tuesday, Feb. 18, 6:30-8 p.m.**

## **The Secrets to Effective Family Communication**

Louisville Library, 951 Spruce Street, Louisville

Learn effective communication strategies that will reduce conflict and enhance family relationships.

A Pathways to Success Workshop – Free and open to the public. [www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com)

**Thursday, Feb. 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

## **PEN Presents ~ Teaching Heart: Developing Children's Social and Emotional Intelligence**

BVSD Ed Center, 6500 E. Arapahoe, Boulder

Join Tom McSheehy as he discusses what social and emotional intelligence is, why it's important, and what you can do to develop it in yourself and your children/students. Visit [www.teachingheart.com](http://www.teachingheart.com) or contact Betsy Fox at 720-563-7007 or [betsy.fox@penbv.org](mailto:betsy.fox@penbv.org) for more information. A \$5 donation is suggested.

## MARCH 2014

**Saturday, March 1, 9 a.m.-noon**

### **On the Road to your Future: Transitions Resource Fair** (for youth 14 and up and their families)

BVSD Education Center, 6500 East Arapahoe Road, Boulder

Over 70 exhibitors will be available to talk with students and their families about employment and volunteering, college and vocational options, recreation, community living and advocacy, and professional services. Co-sponsored by Association for Community Living and Center for People with Disabilities. For more information, contact BVSD Parent Support Center at 720-561-5918 or email

[anna.stewart@bvsd.org](mailto:anna.stewart@bvsd.org).

**Monday, March 3, 7-7:30 p.m.**

### **College Success: Tips and Tools for a Great Experience**

BVSD Ed Center Board Room, 6500 Arapahoe, Boulder

Find out why over 40 percent of undergraduate college students don't earn their degree and how you can make sure your child isn't one of them. A Pathways to Parenting Success Presentation - Live!

Join live or watch on Comcast Ch22 or streamed on [www.BVSD.org](http://www.BVSD.org).

[www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com)

**Tuesday, March 4, 6:30-8 p.m.**

### **Aging: Fulfillment versus Despair**

Meadows Branch Library, 4800 Baseline Road, Boulder

Empower yourself with the tools necessary to look back on life with a sense of self-satisfaction instead of regret and bitterness.

A Pathways to Success Workshop – Free and open to the public.

[www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com](http://www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com)

## >> CU Athletics Basketball

On Friday, February 14 the CU Women's Basketball team takes on Washington for their breast cancer awareness game. Fans can purchase \$5 tickets in advance at [CUBuffs.com/promo](http://CUBuffs.com/promo) using promo code PINK. Come cheer on the Colorado Buffaloes, wear pink and help support breast cancer awareness!

- Friday, February 14, 6:30 p.m. – CU Women's Basketball vs. Washington: Pink Game! Fans can purchase \$5 tickets in advance. To purchase tickets go to [CUBuffs.com/promo](http://CUBuffs.com/promo) and use promo code PINK. Tickets subject to availability & online processing fees apply.

The Colorado Women's Basketball team takes on Utah, Washington State and UCLA this month as well:

- Sunday, Feb. 2, Noon – CU Women's Basketball vs. Utah
- Sunday, Feb. 16, 1 p.m. – CU Women's Basketball vs. Washington State: National Girls and Women in Sports Day! Free Admission to skills stations and game. Call 303-492-4356 for more information.
- Friday, Feb. 28, 6 p.m. – CU Women's Basketball vs. UCLA

For more information and to purchase your tickets, visit [CUBuffs.com](http://CUBuffs.com) or call 303-49-BUFFS (24356).