

## Your Mind and Body

for teens

The teen years are times of rapid change and growth. Because you are older and bigger than children, you are often lumped into the adult category, and as a result, you can be overlooked in the grief process.

So you are no longer a child, but not quite an adult. Just where do you fit in? And how many times have you or your parents said to each other, “You just don’t understand!” Well, you are both right. There are physiological (the body) and neurological (the brain) differences going on during the teen years that put you in a category of your own. Check these out.

### THE TEEN

#### Brain

- Grey matter (thinking part of the brain) experiences huge growth spurt
- Frontal cortex (reasoning, planning, judgment, impulse control) not fully developed until age 23-26
- Ability to take in, process, organize and understand information not fully developed
- Ability to judge situations, people and behaviors not developed (teens may experiment with risky behaviors and make poor decisions not considering the consequences)
- Less balanced behavior and decision-making
- Rely more on the amygdale (portion of the brain that releases gut reactions)

#### Body

- Physical growth spurts
- Puberty—changes in hormones
- Sexual development
- More sleep needed

### THE ADULT

#### Brain

- Grey matter developed
- Frontal cortex fully developed
- Able to take in, process, organize and understand information
- Able to distinguish and judge risky behaviors, people and situations and weigh the consequences of each
- More balanced behavior and decision-making
- Rely more on frontal cortex (portion of the brain responsible for reasoning, judgment and impulse control)

#### Body

- Fully grown
- Hormones more balanced
- Sexual development complete
- Not as much sleep needed

Even though you may look like an adult, there are differences that separate you. The experience of grief can be very different for teens than it is for adults. You may grieve in similar ways, but you and the adults in your life both need to understand that you do not have the same tools—the life experience, support, resources and coping mechanisms—that they have.