

# TEN THINGS TO KNOW

## WHEN DESIGNING FOR TEENS

### TEENS ARE:



#### 1. BUILDING HABITS FOR LIFE:

Teens' brains are undergoing the last major restructuring of development, making the teen years the perfect time to build skills and habits that help them throughout life. But negative habits "stick" more at this time, too.



#### 2. CATCHING ONTO YOU, FAST:

Teens are getting wiser about the world. They're reaching a cognitive peak and learn very quickly. They easily see through attempts to manipulate or preach to them and don't respond well to hypocrisy or unfairness.



#### 3. IN NEED OF POSITIVE CONNECTIONS:

Above all, teens need access to strengthening experiences, environments, and relationships that help them grow in positive ways. They want to be close to adults, even as they figure out how to be more independent.



#### 4. MORE TOLERANT THAN TEENS USED TO BE:

Teens today value diversity and acceptance even more than previous generations. They care about authentic inclusion and diversity.



#### 5. NOT JUST WEIRD:

Teens aren't just Western, Educated, and from Industrialized, Rich, Democratic countries. They need their uniqueness and diversity to be reflected in the spaces where they learn.



#### 6. SENSITIVE TO REWARDS, ESPECIALLY SOCIAL ONES:

Teens have more dopamine circulating in their brains than adults. They are very sensitive to "feel-good" rewards like those in video games. Teens do riskier things when other teens are around, partly to earn status and respect.



#### 7. STILL LEARNING TO CONTROL IMPULSES & EMOTIONS:

Teens are still developing connections in the prefrontal cortex. They have a harder time controlling impulses and emotions and predicting the consequences of their actions than they will in the future.



#### 8. IN NEED OF MORE SLEEP:

Teens need more sleep than adults to thrive, and they might need support in order to make the best choices for their health.



#### 9. FACING A LOT OF STRESS:

Teens are under a ton of pressure. Also, most mental illnesses, if they are going to appear, show up between early adolescence and young adulthood. Teens need ways to cope and to be able to seek help without stigma.



#### 10. TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO THEY ARE:

Teens want to try on different roles and expressions and figure out where they belong. They need social spaces to interact, experiment, negotiate, and resolve conflicts. But toxicity and bullying should be proactively prevented.

# DESIGNING GAMES **WITH AND FOR TEENS** IS IMPORTANT, UNIQUELY CHALLENGING, AND AT THE CORE OF WHAT WE DO AT **iTHRIVE GAMES.**

When we craft experiences for teens, we're shaping what they believe is possible and important in our world and about themselves. We believe games can provide the social models and skill-building, connection, and exploration opportunities teens need to thrive. Our goal is to partner with developers who recognize both the vulnerabilities and opportunities of the teen years. We support those developers with the tools and expertise they need to design socially, emotionally, and personally meaningful games for teens.

## DESIGNING FOR TEENS? ARE TEENS PLAYING YOUR GAMES? **iTHRIVE CAN SUPPORT YOU** IN DRAWING ON THE SCIENCE OF ADOLESCENCE TO:



CREATE POSITIVE, MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES TEENS WILL RESPOND TO



BROADEN TEENS' SENSE OF WHAT'S POSSIBLE BY PRESENTING BETTER MODELS OF THE WORLD



ENCOURAGE HEALTHY, PROSOCIAL INTERACTIONS IN AND AROUND GAMES



AVOID EXPLOITING TEENS' UNIQUE VULNERABILITIES, LIKE LIMITED IMPULSE CONTROL



BETTER REPRESENT AND ADDRESS MENTAL ILLNESS



PROVIDE IN-GAME SPACES FOR COLLABORATION AND EXPLORATION



CREATE MORE DIVERSITY OF CHARACTERS AND CIRCUMSTANCES