

Giving a Fish a Bath: The Untold Story of the Adolescent Mind



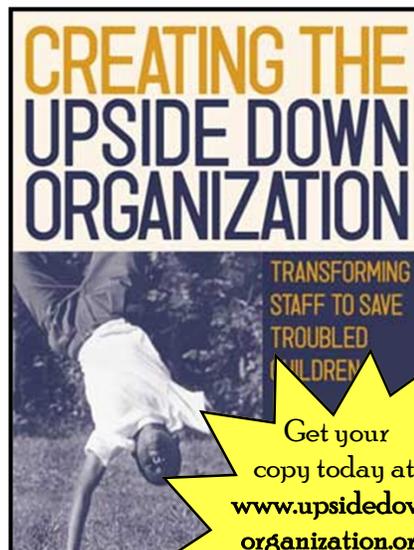
PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

Carroll County Risky Business Conference
JUNE 18, 2013

Heather Higgins, LCSW-C
The Upside Down Organization • www.upsidedownorganization.org
410-444-5415

What's Different About The Upside Down Organization?

- A unique learning organization to “Help Adults Help Kids.”
- Nonprofit. Proceeds go to kids at The Children’s Guild.
- Applied Research. We are operating schools, group homes, foster care, mental health and after-school programs!
- Word of Mouth Marketing. Our participants “spread the word.”



About Your Presenter



Heather Higgins, LCSW-C is the Director of Training and Development for the Upside Down Organization and a Clinician at Monarch Academy- Baltimore Public Charter School. Heather has been practicing Social Work in Baltimore, MD since 2000 focusing her efforts on working with children and families.

Heather obtained her BA from Loyola University and her MSW from the University of MD, Baltimore. She has spent her career working with children in residential, school, foster care, outpatient, and inpatient settings.

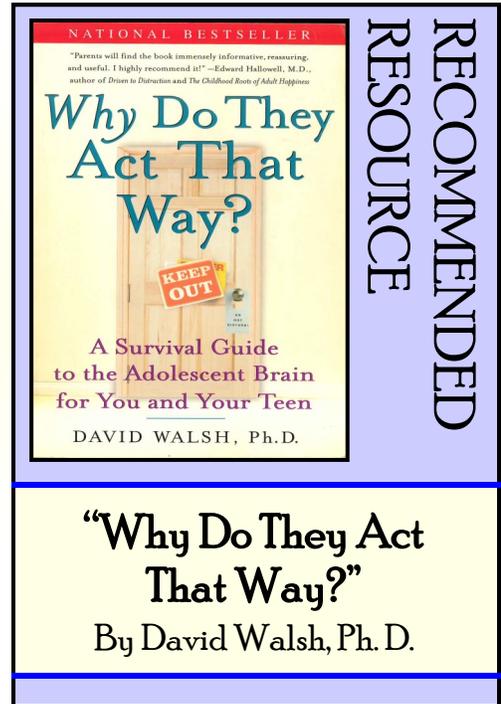
Currently, Heather oversees the training department at UDO and can be found actively presenting interactive workshops and keynote addresses both nationally and internationally. Heather also provides counseling and behavior management services to the students at Monarch Academy.



FACTS *and* MYTHS About Adolescents

TRUE or FALSE

- T F Telling teens that they are “smart” may negatively impact academic performance.
- T F Adolescent lying is a direct result of bad morals, lack of ethics, poor parenting or all of these above.
- T F Most of the content that teens learn in school is directly relevant to their life outside the school walls.
- T F The adolescent brain is like an adult brain but with several years less experience.
- T F The start time of a teen’s school can have a significant impact on his/her academic performance.



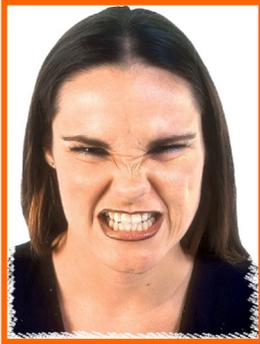
Technology and Teens



- Are teens “wired” differently in a neurological sense because they have grown-up with technology since the cradle?
- How might lifetime exposure to technology influence how a teen learns?
- Is the modern adolescent brain harder or easier to teach than past generations?

NOTES

Teen Vulnerability



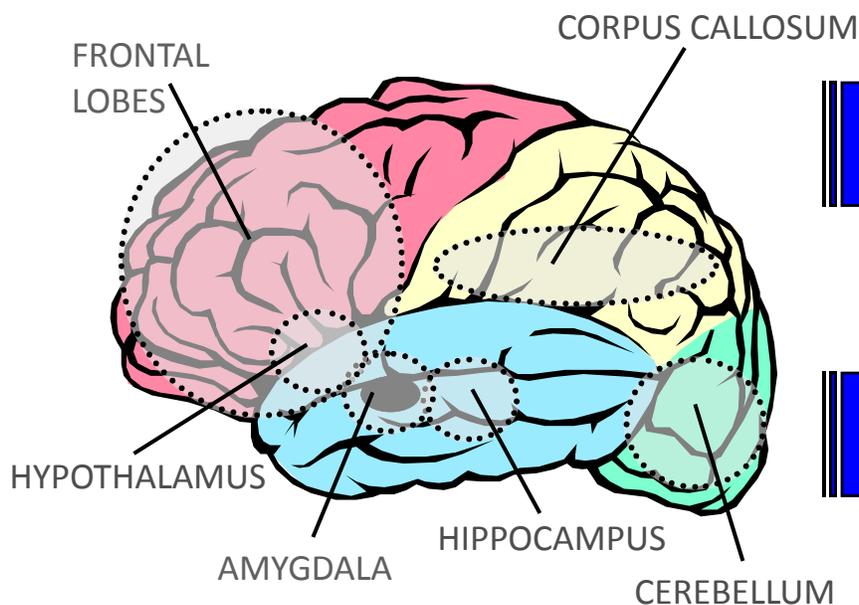
Adolescence is the disorderly transition between infancy and insubordination.



Overview of Adolescent Brain-Related Changes

- Vulnerability to stress, rewards and/or risky behavior
- Greater sensitivity to rewards but less awareness
- Lessened ability to read or manage emotions
- Weak at spontaneous problem-solving skills (“Fuzzy Brain”)
- Poor at future orientation

Teen Brain Anatomy



The hippocampus is the brain's memory processor and can be greatly influenced by the amygdala.

Effective frontal lobe function is critical to social, academic and vocational success.



Four Secrets of the Teenage Brain

Blossoming

- Twice in a Lifetime
- The Million Way Map
- What Were You Thinking?

Pruning

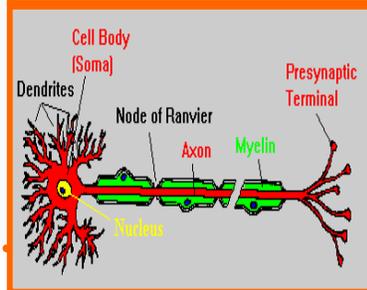
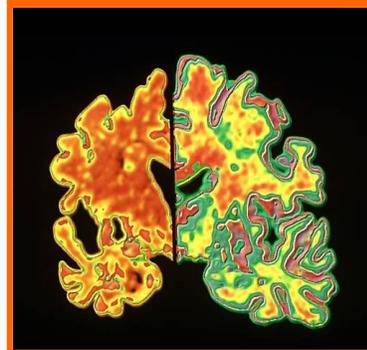
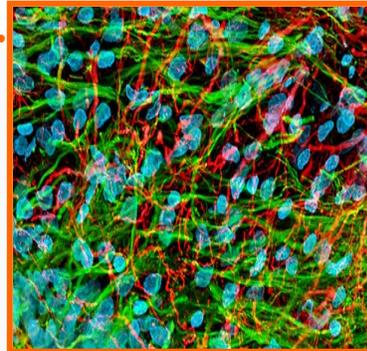
- “Use it or lose it.”
- Windows of Opportunity
- Windows of Sensitivity

Myelination

- The neurons that fire together, wire together.”
- Windows of Sensitivity and Addiction Risks

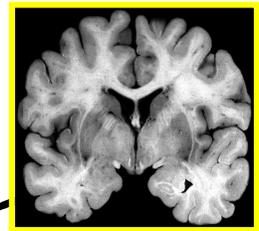
Hormones

- Isn't it all about the hormones?

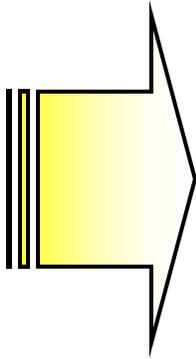


	BOYS	GIRLS
Key Hormone(s)		
Impact on Limbic System		
Impact on Neurotransmitter Levels		
Behaviors Anticipated		
Sex Drive		
Notes		

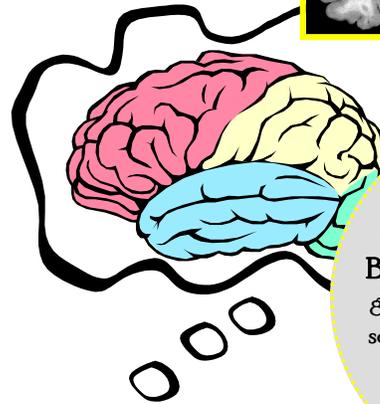
What Can We Do? Seven Essential Strategies



1. Teach Teens About Their Unique Brains.



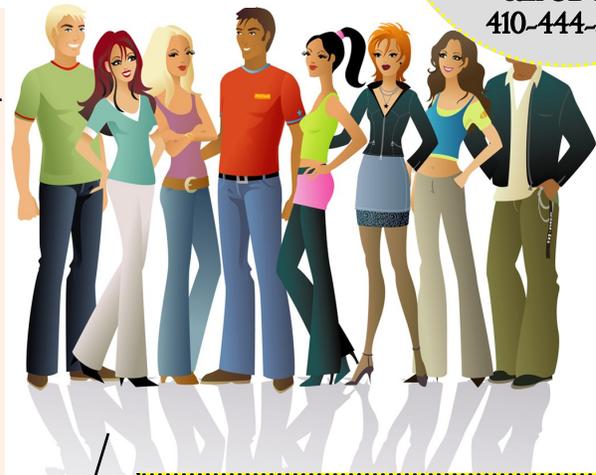
- How They Work (i.e., the influence of emotion on learning)
- Strengths
- Vulnerabilities
- How to Care For the Brain
- How to Think Better



Did you know that UDO has a course called "MY AWESOME BRAIN" that is specifically geared to middle and high school students? Interested in learning more — call UDO at 410-444-5415!

Many Things HURT the Brain

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Trauma | • Sleep deprivation |
| • Drugs and alcohol | • Smoking |
| • Malnutrition | • Excessive caffeine |
| • Chronic Stress | • Too much TV |
| • Infections – HIV | • Violent video games |
| • Environmental toxins | • Dehydration |
| | • Lack of exercise |



Many Things HELP the Brain

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| • Social connections | • Positive thinking |
| • New learning | • Gratitude |
| • Good diet | • Relaxation |
| • Vitamins | • Happy memories |
| • Exercise | • Learning music |

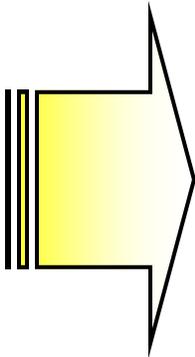
BRAIN RULE: Emotion Impacts Learning

The discovery that emotions influence the teen mind and body far more than we ever believed (and we believed a lot!).

What Can We Do? Seven Essential Strategies

2. It's Not Personal, It's Just Adolescence.

Quiet space for

- 
- Teen brain reacts emotionally instead of logically.
 - Teens experience new, powerful emotions before they can even articulate them.
 - Teen brain is highly vulnerable to stress.
 - Teen brain has trouble anticipating consequences.
 - Blossomed brains overcomplicate problems.
 - Bigger doesn't mean better!
 - Adolescent brains don't read faces very well, recognize body language or always understand tone of voice.

“Nudge a Neighbor”

Can you think of a story that reflects one of these characteristics of adolescence?

In your story, did the adult take the behavior personally?

Brain Rule: MEMORIES ARE MALLEABLE

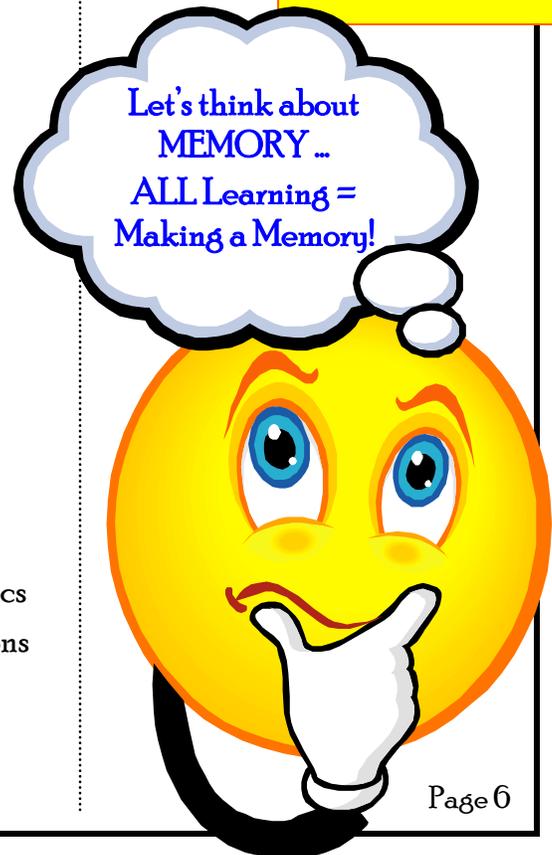
- Memory is not a thing, but an ongoing process.
- **This discovery means that memory is neither fixed nor permanent.**
- It can be easily altered (impaired or improved) through better teaching and learning strategies.

Our synapses, neural networks and our states influence connectivity, access and memory accuracy.

MALLEABLE MEMORIES:

What Do I Do About It?

- Pay Closer Attention
- Emotions/Intensity
- Repetition/Revisit
- Coherent/Meaningful
- Embody/Physical
- Rhymes/Mnemonics
- Images/Associations



What Can We Do? Seven Essential Strategies

3. Sense and Meaning



Try this strategy for three weeks and determine if your teens are remembering more of what you want them to...



1. Survival Value Info/Experiences

2. Learning that Makes Sense

Can the teen understand the item on the basis of past experiences

3. Learning that Has Meaning

Is the information relevant to the teen?

What Gets Remembered?

Incorporate These Two Essential Questions
into Every Teaching Moment:

1. How does this relate to what teens already know?

2. How might teens use this in the future?

What Can We Do?

Seven Essential Strategies

4. Adopt the Language of the Brain.

Research continues to reveal that what we say to teens and how we say it has a powerful impact on their developing brains.



1.

“DON'T TELL YOUR TEENS THEY'RE SMART”

“Don't tell your [teens] they are smart. More than three decades of research shows that a focus on effort – not on intelligence or ability – is the key to success in school and in life.”

— Carol Dweck, PhD.

2.

“DON'T OVEREMPHASIZE INTELLECT OR TALENT”

An overemphasis on intellect or talent – and the implication that such traits are innate and fixed – leaves young people vulnerable to failure, fearful of challenges, and unmotivated to learn.

MINDSET

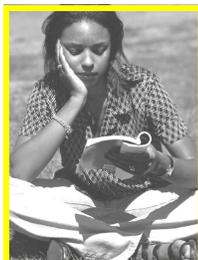
FIXED
GROWTH

Intelligence is **fixed trait** — you only have a certain amount and that's that.

Mistakes are attributed to a lack of ability.

Intelligence is **malleable** and can be developed through education and hard work.

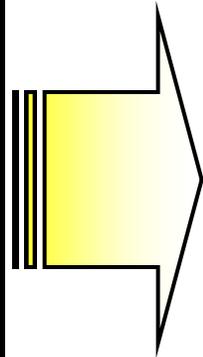
Mistakes are attributed to a lack of effort.



What Can We Do?

Seven Essential Strategies

5. Teach Empathy and Build Strong Communication Skills



Empathy is a learned skill. Help teens develop empathy and strong communication skills.



You Feel _____

Because _____

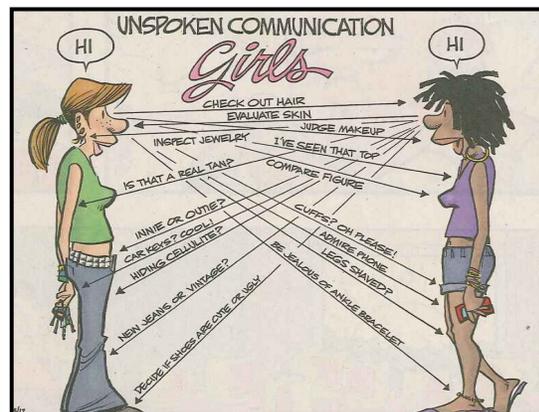
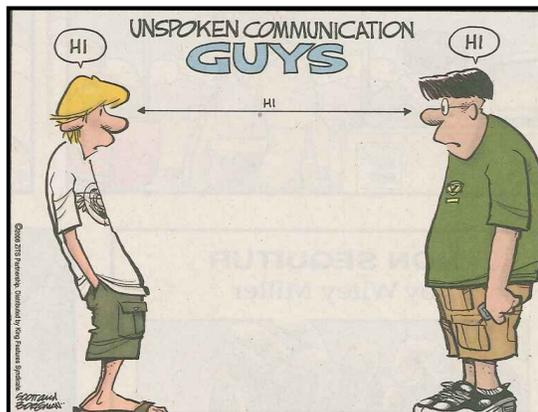
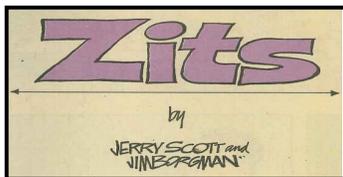
This Empathy card is courtesy of:
 The Upside Down Organization • 410-870-2481
www.upsidedownorganization.org

Social Conditions Change Us

- Social conditions influence gene expression. (Kandel, 2002)
- Social stress also impacts test scores and attention span. (Hoffman, 1996)
- Social conditions influence health and mortality. (Berkman, et al. 2002)

BRAIN RULE:
Social Factors Can Be Supreme

The discovery that social conditions have a much greater impact than previously believed.



What Can We Do?

Seven Essential Strategies

6. Make It Real: The Survival Game

Teens need preparation and practice in making good decisions under stress — help them out by providing a safe place to discover how to stay safe!

THE SURVIVAL GAME

1. Write vignettes about common challenges and risks experienced by teens in your school/community.
2. Transcribe each vignette onto an index card.
3. Offer a teen the index cards “upside down” and have them select one.
4. The teen reads the card out loud.
5. The teen then brainstorms healthy ways to respond to the vignette.
6. The adult(s) offers additional suggestions for healthy responses.
7. The teen and the adult(s) role play the vignette.

THE RULES

Create your own scenarios like the ones below on index cards and start interacting with your teen!

Example 1 – BULLYING

Your two best friends tell you that a kid in your math class, Louis, told the teacher that the three of you copied off each other’s papers on a recent math test. “Now the principal wants to see us in her office” they explain. One of your friends then says: “We need to teach Louis a lesson. When he gets off the bus today, the three of us are going to pound him.”

Example 2 – MARIJUANA

You were asked to play drums for “New Town Wave,” the most popular rock band in your high school. As a sophomore, you are thrilled to get this opportunity. During your first rehearsal with the band, the lead guitarist breaks out a joint. Everyone takes a toke and then it comes to you.

Example 3 – SEX

Your best friend has been bragging about having sex with his girlfriend, Tracy. Tracy tells your girlfriend, Beth, about the sex. Beth tells you she’s willing to “go all the way” if you want to so that the two of you won’t have to feel bad about your friends having sex when you haven’t.

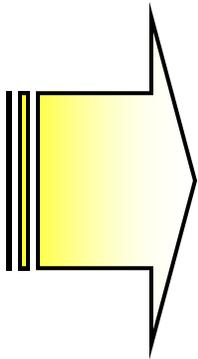
Example 4 – ALCOHOL

You are spending the night at Sam’s house. So is your friend Tracy. When Sam’s mom leaves to pick up Sam’s brother, Sam brings out a bottle of Boones Farm Strawberry wine. Sam exclaims, “This stuff is awesome! It tastes like Kool-Aid, but makes you feel sooo good! Let’s party!”

What Can We Do?

Seven Essential Strategies

7. Don't Forget the Fundamentals



- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Coping Skills

Exercise is AWESOME for the Brain!

1. **Neurogenesis:** Exercise sparks the growth of new brain cells.
2. **Connectivity:** Stimulates older neurons to form dense interconnected webs that make the brain run faster and more efficiently.
3. **BDNF:** "Miracle Grow for the Brain" stimulated by exercise.
4. **Bigger Frontal Lobes:** Prediction, judgment, planning and organization are improved.
5. **Good Neurotransmitters:** Dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine are elevated after exercise.

HURT the Brain ~ Malnutrition

- Body makes itself new every five months
- You are what you eat
- Body needs good nutrition to function right
- Junk food means poor brain function



6 Teen Nutrition Tips

1. Have a healthy, quick breakfast with protein (peanut butter, cheese, yogurt, turkey sausage, nuts, eggs, milk, ham, turkey, smoothie).
2. Switch to whole grain waffles, breads, cereals and rolls (B-vitamins, Omega-3's).
3. Limit soft drinks.
4. Integrate dark green lettuce.
5. Eat the colors of the rainbow.
6. Add rinsed, canned beans to salads, soups and casseroles.

Concord Grape Juice

- Blueberries
- Almonds and Walnuts
- Orange Juice w/Zinc
- Brown Rice

GREAT BRAIN FOODS

- Vegetables
- Whole Grains
- Milk
- Turkey
- Olive
- Salmon
- Garlic
- Hot Cocoa
- Bananas



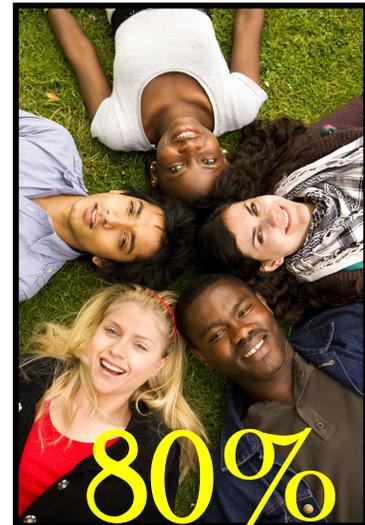
What Can We Do?

Seven Essential Strategies

7. Don't Forget the Fundamentals

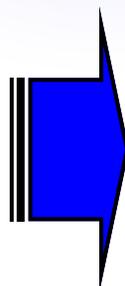
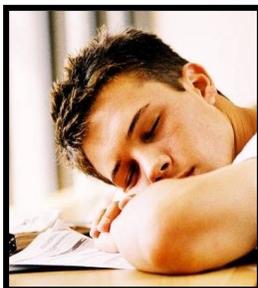
Sleep

- Sleep is enormously important to healthy brain development and learning.
- Adolescents need 9.25 hours of sleep per night.
- Typically, teens have significant sleep deprivation and daytime sleepiness. (Carskadon et al. 1998)
- The result is typically drowsy teens in class and academic underperformance. (Maquet, 2001)
- Less sleep contributes to poor emotional regulation. (Dahl, 1999)



Why So Little Sleep?

- The neurological changes in adolescence are dramatic and teens need more sleep time to learn, organize, and store new learning. (Wolfson & Carskadon, 1998)
- But the teen brain releases melatonin (a sleep inducer) later at night. This means teens will naturally want to stay up later and sleep in later.



Use your intimate knowledge of your teen to help them discover what stress-release strategies work for them. In particular, incorporate adequate, low-stress “down time” into your teen’s stress management toolbox.

Strategies to Reduce Stress/Lower Cortisol

- Safety/Security
- Elevate Status
- Predictability
- Choice/Control
- Relationship
- Nurturance
- Exercise
- Hydration
- Nutrition
- Music
- Movement
- Helping Others
- Humor
- Ritual

And Finally, A Few MORE Practical Suggestions From Our Teens ...

- Be proactive socially; provide teams, clubs and affinity groups but be creative and inclusive!
- Let us learn by experience but with mentors and supervision.
- Structure and hold limits (with a smile).
- Help us understand relevance of what you want us to do.
- Help us survive until our brain's more mature.

Resources

Books

How the Brain Learns
by David Sousa

Why Do They Act That Way?
by David Walsh

The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness
by Edward M. Hallowell

Different Brains, Different Learners
by Eric Jensen

Teaching With the Brain in Mind
by Eric Jensen

Websites

www.sciencedaily.com

www.brainplace.com

www.jensenlearning.com

www.brainconnection.com

www.ninds.nih.gov

www.eurakalert.org

www.dana.org

www.ajcn.org

