

February 2008

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Reading treat

Want your middle grader to read more? Ask him to read to you while you make dinner. Let him choose the selection. *Examples:* poem, magazine or newspaper article, short story, movie review. He'll sharpen his reading skills while enjoying your attention.

Parent programs

Get involved in your child's education by attending parent programs at her school. When you receive notices about an evening session on course selection or a lunchtime seminar on homework, jot the date on your calendar. Programs like these will give you the chance to learn about issues facing your middle grader, meet her friends' parents, and get to know the school staff.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lack of sleep can lower your child's grades. If she's tired in class, it will be harder for her to concentrate on schoolwork. To prevent this problem, help your middle grader pick a bedtime that provides 8–9 hours of sleep—and then stick to the schedule.

Worth quoting

"The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing."
John Powell

Just for fun

Q: What is the smartest state?

A: Alabama. It has four A's and one B!



Showing respect

Donna's 12-year-old son has started talking back to her, leaving the room when she's in the middle of a sentence, and ignoring her requests. Like many middle graders, he is not being respectful.

What can you do when your child acts like this? Try these ideas for promoting respect in your home.

Use good manners

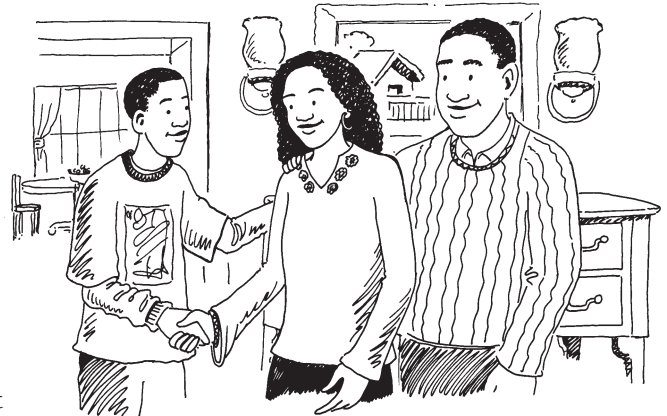
Everyday good manners are a basic building block of respect. Be sure your middle grader knows you expect him to say "please" and "thank you" and not to interrupt conversations. Explain that being polite shows others that you respect their feelings.

Watch body language

Does your child realize that body language can convey disrespect—even without words? Shrugging his shoulders, shaking his head, rolling his eyes, or turning his back on adults can all be rude. Point out this behavior when it happens, and suggest alternatives (nicely saying what's on your mind, asking to talk later).

Set an example

Your youngster will learn respect from how you behave. Try to let him see you treating your own parents with respect



(talking in a pleasant tone, listening to their opinions). Make sure your middle grader hears you asking your spouse about his day and complimenting him regularly. Be courteous to your child, too, giving him the respect you want him to give you.

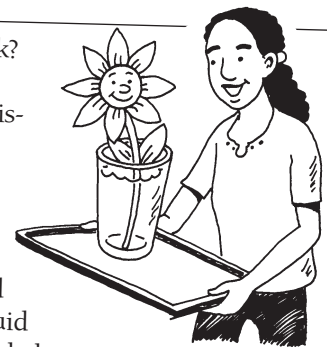
Tip: Enforce consequences for disrespectful behavior. You might have your youngster write a letter of apology or take away a favorite activity (computer time, a sleepover). 👍

Science fun

Why does soap work? How do plants absorb water? Let your child discover the answers with these experiments:

- Put vegetable oil and water in a jar, and shake—the oil and water separate. Add liquid dishwashing soap, and shake again—the ingredients combine. Why? The detergent breaks the "surface tension" as the soap molecules are attracted to both the water and oil molecules. This reaction allows the soap to break down grease.

- Stand a white flower in a glass of water. Add a few drops of food coloring. By the next day, the flower will have turned color! Why? Plants "drink" water through their stems and, in this case, absorb the color along with the water. 👍

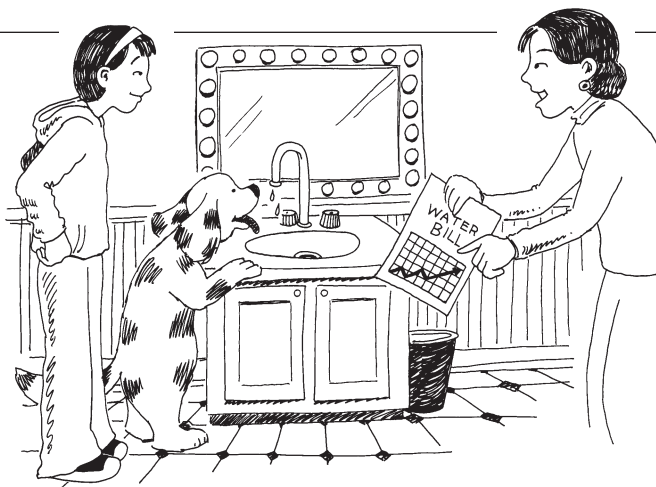


Think about it

Thinking critically helps your child evaluate information and solve problems — skills she will need through high school and beyond. Get your youngster thinking with these strategies:

1. Think aloud to show how you evaluate a situation.

Example: You hit a traffic jam while in the car together. Say, “The traffic is all backed up. I wonder if the back way would be quicker?” Talk yourself through the answer (how far out of the way you would go, whether you’re in a



her check the water company’s Web site for possible causes (leaky faucets, higher rates). Finally, she can search out ideas for conserving water as a family. Finding answers by consulting various sources will strengthen your child’s thinking skills. 👍

hurry). Then, the next time your child faces a dilemma, have her think through the options out loud.

2. Ask your youngster’s advice for solving household problems.

Example: Your water bill is much higher than usual. Suggest that she compare bills from the past year and chart your water usage. Have

Talking games

Talking with your middle grader can help him learn how to communicate. Here are three fun ways to practice:

1. Have family members write three facts about themselves on a slip of paper. Mix them up, and give each person one to read aloud. Together, decide who wrote each slip.



2. Ask everyone to name a best and worst (breakfast, vacation spot). Keep the conversation going by encouraging follow-up questions.

3. Shuffle a deck of cards. Take turns drawing one and asking a question based on the card’s suit:

- ♥ Hearts = Why (Why do you like your best friend?)
- ♦ Diamonds = Who (Who is your favorite author?)
- ♠ Spades = Where (Where would you bury treasure so no one could find it?)
- ♣ Clubs = What (What should we do this weekend?) 👍

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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Q & A Report card trends

Q My daughter gets her report card next week. What should I be looking for at this time in the school year?

A This is a good time to look at trends. Are your daughter’s grades improving, falling, or about the same? Is she doing better in some subjects and worse in others?

If grades are rising, that’s a sign that your child’s efforts are paying off. If they’re dropping, however, you’ll want to explore the reason. Is a particular unit giving her trouble? Did a falling-out with a classmate get in the way?

Follow up with your middle grader’s teacher by e-mail or phone on any questions you have. The teacher will be able to suggest next steps, such as making sure homework is done on time, getting a tutor, or selecting the right courses for next year. 👍



Parent to Parent Musical notes

My son Jared loves music. So when I saw a story on the evening news about how music can help kids do better in school, I got excited.

I spoke with our school’s music teacher, and he had some great ideas. First, he suggested that I encourage Jared to write new lyrics to a favorite song. Mr. Franklin said that would help my son work on vocabulary and grammar. He also said Jared could practice patterns

and other math skills simply by tapping along to the beat.

Finally, he suggested that we try letting him listen to music while he does his homework. He said the right tunes can inspire creativity and also provide comfort when work is stressful.

I’m happy to know that music has so many benefits. And I’m glad we’ve found ways to support Jared’s love of music. 👍

