

January 2007

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



In the news

To spark your child's interest in current events, watch the news on TV together, or listen to radio broadcasts while in the car. Try to tie something you hear to what she is learning in school. "I can't believe how much it's raining in California. Weren't you just learning about weather patterns in science?"

Manners, please

Teaching your child to treat others respectfully can be a daily event. Simple gestures, like letting someone go first at the store or helping an older person with her coat, set a good example. And these everyday lessons help youngsters learn the golden rule: treat others as you want to be treated.

Growing up

As hormone levels rise in middle graders, their bodies start to grow rapidly. But not everything grows equally, which can lead to big feet or gangly arms. Remind your child that body parts will balance out by adulthood. For now, help him focus on this—growth spurts show he's growing up!

Worth quoting

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."

William James

Just for fun

Q: How did the Pilgrims sleep on the Mayflower?

A: With their eyes shut!



"This year I will..."

Tips for a great year

Help your child make 2007 the best year ever! Encourage him to put learning first as he sets his New Year's resolutions. Suggest that he...

Keep up

"I will complete assignments on time."

Idea: Have your child make a stack of "To Do" sheets with dates at the top and a numbered list of lines underneath. Each day he can cross off items as he completes them. Your middle grader will feel a sense of accomplishment daily and more in control of his schoolwork—and his life.

Get help

"I will ask for extra help when I need it."

Idea: If your child doesn't understand a math unit or falls behind in social studies, remind him to seek help right away. Middle school teachers are usually available before school, during study period, or after school. Going to them will not only get your youngster on



track, it will also show his teachers that he cares.

Reach out

"I will try something new."

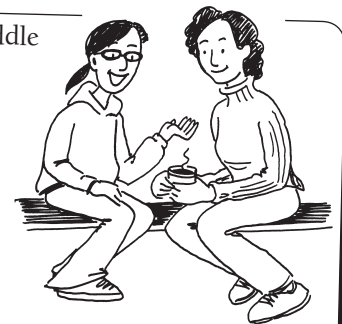
Idea: Suggest that your youngster join a club or pursue a new interest in school. Does he like school plays? Encourage him to try out for the next one. Is he interested in technology? Maybe the computer lab could use a hand. Trying new things will help your child expand his knowledge—and build confidence at the same time. 👍

Talk time

Want to improve your relationship with your middle grader? Try talking. You could:

- Give her a compliment. Recognizing a special quality in your child is a great way to jump-start a conversation.
- Ask her to describe her "perfect" day. Then, tell her what yours would be like.
- Pass along a favorite joke, or share a funny story from your childhood.

When you're talking to your middle grader, try to stop what you're doing and face her. Giving her your full attention lets her know she's important. Also, pause before responding. Spending a few seconds to form your response shows that you take what she is saying seriously. 👍

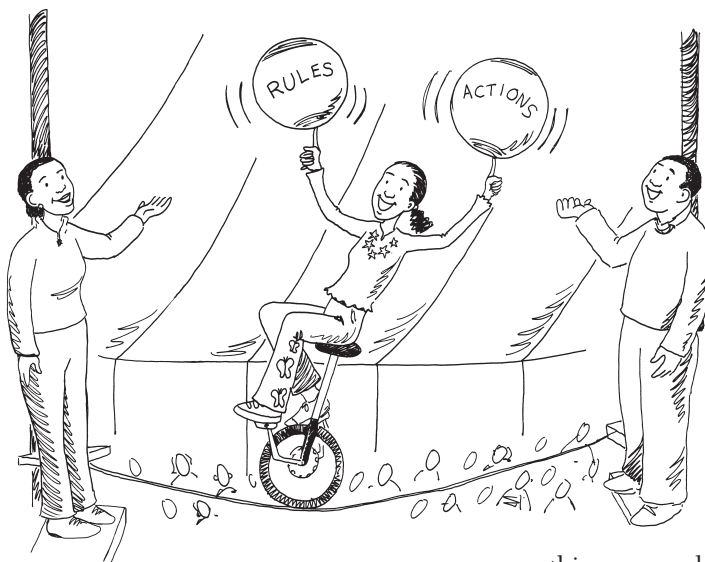


Deciding on discipline

There are many things easier than disciplining a middle grader. But there aren't many that are more important.

Try these strategies to help your child continue learning right from wrong as she grows older.

● **Be clear.** Explain the rules—and the consequences for breaking them—in advance. *Example:* “Your bike goes in the garage. If you leave it in the middle of the driveway, you’ll lose it for a day.” This system lets your middle grader know that she’s in charge of her behavior.



● **Be fair.** Link the consequence to the action. For instance, if your child breaks the family computer rules, she loses computer privileges for a week. This makes more sense to your middle grader than, say, taking away her allowance.

● **Be direct.** Limit your comments to the situation at hand. Try not to bring up things your child did last week or to use negative labels (“lazy,” “forgetful”). Staying focused will keep arguments from flaring. Plus, being calm and direct sends the message that you still love her, no matter how she acts. 👍

Report card alert

Report cards are useful learning tools. They help measure your child’s progress, and they shed light on areas that need improvement. But there’s one thing they shouldn’t be: a surprise.



Stay on top of your middle grader’s progress with these tips.

Watch grades. Check grades online if your school offers this option. Also, look through your child’s binder for marked quizzes and homework. Keeping up will let you celebrate success or catch a falling grade.

Know assignments. List test and project dates on a family calendar. That will remind you to see how your middle grader did on each one.

Ask questions. If grades are dropping, ask your youngster to explain. Did he miss assignments? Does he understand the material?

Note: If your child’s grades are good, be sure to praise him! 👍



Q & A Privacy, please

Q My middle grader is spending a lot of time alone in her room. Should I be worried?

A Chances are your child just wants privacy. As youngsters mature, they need more privacy to help them become more independent.

Try giving your daughter a small whiteboard to hang outside her room. She can write “Quiet—homework in progress” if she’s studying, or simply, “Please knock.” That will help you remember to ask before opening her door.

Also, don’t listen to your daughter’s phone conversations, open her mail, or read her diaries. Instead, spend time together, and ask her questions to find out how things are going.

Note: If you have any reason to suspect your child is hiding something important, such as drugs or other dangerous behavior, speak to a school counselor. 👍



Parent to Parent Writing practice

Back in September, my son’s teacher gave the class a year-long writing assignment. They had to keep a daily journal, and entries could be about anything they wanted.

“I don’t know what to write about,” Josh complained. So I suggested he write about just that—not knowing what to write about. He rolled his eyes, but it got him started.



Then, we brainstormed ideas to use as prompts (“If I were a famous doctor...,” “Pizza is the best food because...”). As Josh got used to writing each day, he began to come up with new ideas himself.

The effort has paid off. He enjoys writing more, and his essays have gotten better. Recently, his English teacher noted on his paper, “Vastly improved writing.” Way to go, Josh! 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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