

March 2006

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### Virtual math

If your child's math skills could use a boost, have her check out the National Library of Virtual Manipulatives for Interactive Mathematics Web site at <http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary>. She'll get entertaining, hands-on practice with basic math operations, geometry, fractions, and more.

### Character tip

Want to raise kids who are tolerant of different ethnicities? Research your family heritage together. Which cultures are part of your ancestry? What are the histories and customs of those cultures? Learning about the diversity in their own background can help your children be more understanding of others.

### Frustration fighters

Middle graders often feel overwhelmed by the pressures of school and adolescence. Have your child make a list of things that may add to his frustration. *Examples:* disorganized desk, cluttered locker, piles of laundry. Let him know that tackling these smaller problems will help him handle the larger ones more easily.

### Worth quoting

"Worrying is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do but doesn't get you anywhere."

*Anonymous*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's worse than finding a worm in your apple?

**A:** Finding half a worm!



## Ready for standardized tests

Standardized tests are a part of every student's life. Doing well on them requires more than knowledge. Preparation and follow-through are also important. Your middle grader can make the most of tests with these tips:

- Encourage your child to strengthen her testing "muscles" at home with regular reading and writing practice. *Examples:* read every day; look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary while doing homework; keep a journal about important events. Making routines like these a habit will sharpen her skills and help her demonstrate what she knows at test time.

- Help your child develop good test-taking skills. Advise her to read instructions, questions, and multiple-choice answers carefully and to double-check her work when she's finished. Studies have shown that the first answer a student chooses is usually the right one. Your child should only correct an answer if she's sure it's wrong. Being a smart test-taker will lessen her anxiety and improve her scores.

- Go over test results together. If you don't understand what they mean, ask your middle grader's teacher for help. Let your child know that, while the scores aren't the only measure of school success,



they can be useful in discovering her strengths and weaknesses. 👍

### Handling divorce

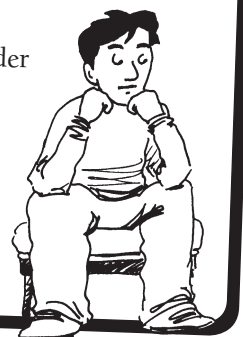
Divorce brings change and uncertainty into a middle grader's world. Although nothing can "make it all better," here are some ways to help your child cope.

**Remain civil.** Keeping expressions of anger at your spouse to a minimum helps everyone feel less stressed.

**Seek help.** Rather than venting your frustrations to your child, talk to a counselor, close friend, or clergy member.

**Embrace the future.** Encourage your middle grader to discuss future plans to avoid feeling like his life is on hold.

**Show love.** Tell your child you love him and that he's not at fault. 👍



# Parenting the middle years

Parenting a middle grader is a constant challenge. Your child is changing—and that means your parenting techniques may need some adjustment too. Here are some guidelines.

## Change the rules

Children need different rules at this age than when they were younger. After all, you probably wouldn't send your middle grader to bed at the same time as his five-year-old sister. Be open to your child's opinions about family rules. *Examples:* getting more phone time, deciding when to do chores.

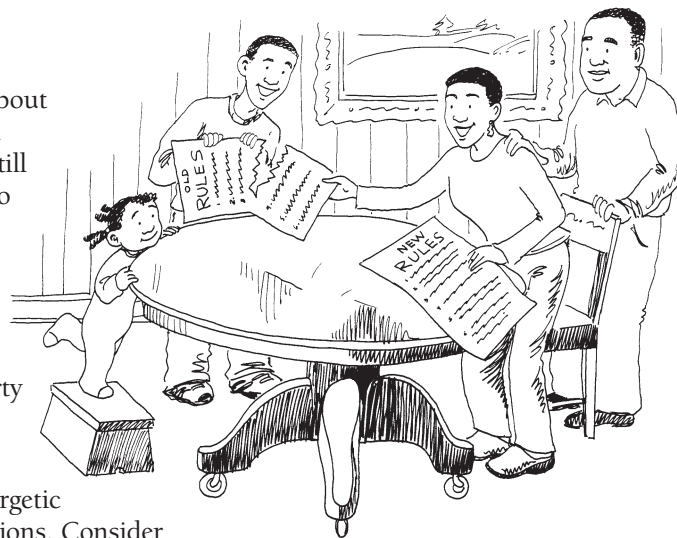
## Let him grow up

The middle years are about guiding your child toward adulthood. Although he still needs your watchful eye to keep him safe, you can give him chances to do things that are important to him, such as attending evening sports events or a supervised party at a friend's house.

## Pick your battles

Middle graders are energetic debaters with strong opinions. Consider saving disagreements for important issues. Rules involving curfews and drug use should be enforced. But less

important things, such as what your child wears to the family picnic, in most cases can be left up to him. 👍



## Activity Sink or float?

How does a heavy ship float, while a small pebble sinks in water? Because of a scientific principle called displacement. Have your middle grader try this experiment.

Fill a bucket with water. Drop in several small pebbles, one at a time. Do they sink or float? Next, tighten the lid on an empty, air-tight jar, and place it in the water. What happens? Then, open the lid, add a pebble to the jar, retighten the lid, and put the jar back in the water. Does it sink or float? Add additional rocks, one by one. What happens eventually?

The pebbles sink because they are heavier than the amount of water they displace (move aside). The empty jar weighs less than the water it displaces, so it floats. When the pebbles are added to the jar, it will float until the jar weighs more than the water it displaces. Then, it will sink. 👍

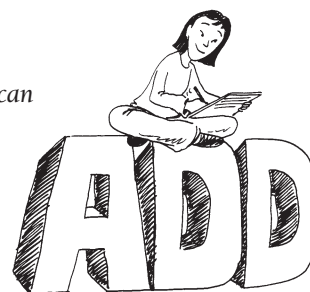
## Q & A Help with ADD

**Q** My child has attention deficit disorder (ADD). How can I help her do better in school?

**A** Students with ADD need help staying focused. This might mean repeated reminders from you and her teachers to write down assignments and take books home.

Help your child figure out how much time to spend on each homework assignment so that everything gets done (for example, 20 to 30 minutes per assignment each night). She may need frequent breaks to help her stay motivated. Together, decide on a daily time and place for homework away from the TV and computer.

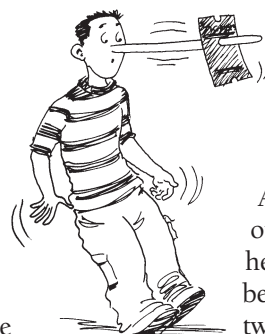
Finally, make sure your middle grader's teachers know she has ADD. Having her sit closer to the front of the classroom can often limit distractions from classmates and help her concentrate. 👍



## Parent to Parent Honesty matters

Last weekend I let my son and his friends see a movie at the mall while I shopped. When I returned to meet them, they were 20 minutes late. "Sorry, Mom. The movie just ended," Tim said.

After being unable to answer a few questions from me about the movie's plot, he admitted that they skipped it and hung out in the mall instead. I explained to Tim



that I didn't like him wandering the mall, but lying made it even worse.

I let my son know that lying has consequences—in this case, spending the next few weekends at home.

After that, I'll be checking up on him for a while to be sure he's where he says he's going to be. I have a feeling Tim will think twice about being dishonest in the future. 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.  
3035 Valley Avenue, Suite 103, Winchester, VA 22601  
540-723-0322 • rfeustomer@aspenpublishers.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540