

April 2008

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Biking and learning

Warm weather and bikes go hand in hand. Suggest that your child go outside to ride and get some exercise. Back inside, have her explore how math and science relate to biking. At www.exploratorium.edu/cycling, she can calculate stopping distances and aerodynamic drag and learn how wheel design affects speed and safety.

Advice for acne

Acne is normal for this age, but it can still be upsetting. Encourage your middle grader to wash his face each morning and night and to shampoo his hair regularly. Clean skin and hair will help lessen breakouts. For severe acne, seek help from a doctor.

Tell the truth

Kids learn by example—and honesty is no exception. If you lie to your boss about being sick, you're sending your child the message that it's okay to be dishonest. Instead, show her that telling the truth is important to you. *Example:* Be honest about your middle grader's age when you go to the movies, even if you have to pay more.

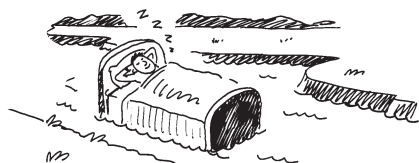
Worth quoting

"Whether you think you can or think you can't, you are right."
Henry Ford

Just for fun

Q: What has a bed but never sleeps?

A: A river.



Riding out the middle years

As your child grows into a teen, he's coping with a lot. School gets harder, friends change, and his own moods shift.

Life will be easier for him if home can be a comfort zone. Try these ideas to help all of you handle the ups and downs of the middle years.

Give him space

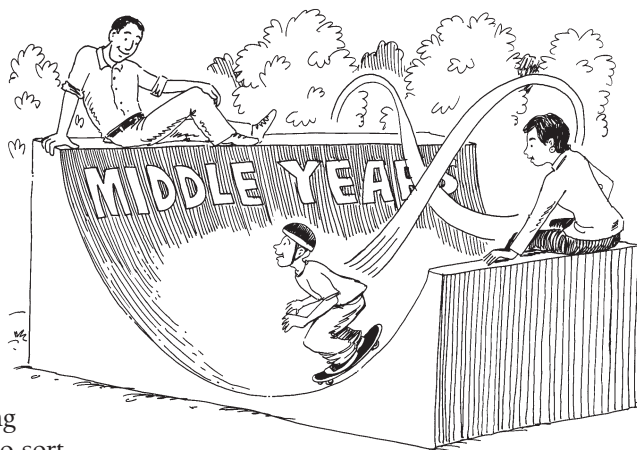
If your youngster is having a rough day, give him time to sort things out. *Example:* "Dad and I are going to watch a show in an hour, if you feel like joining us." He'll realize that you recognize and respect his need for time alone. *Note:* If he stays in his room, check on him later.

Start fresh

When you and your child disagree, try to resolve the issue quickly. Then, move on. For instance, if you quarrel in the evening, don't go to sleep mad at each other. And greet your youngster with a warm "hello" the next morning. Offering a friendly smile gives your middle grader—and you—a chance to begin over.

Be available

Does your child want to be left alone one minute and need you the next? Let him know that you're available for advice any-time—and for rides



and homework help when reasonable (you're not busy or it's worked out in advance). Knowing he can count on you will make him feel more secure. 👍

Reasons to write

Writing is important for every school subject and for communicating in the real world. Here are strategies to give your youngster plenty of practice.

● **Write daily.** Encourage her to choose a writing project and work on it each day. For example, she could write a poem about an important event in her life, turn a favorite short story into a play, or write news articles about her school club. Writing daily will keep her creativity alive.

● **Review a book.** Suggest that your middle grader write a review of a favorite book. She can submit it online for other kids to read at Web sites like www.barnesandnoble.com or www.bookhooks.com. She'll work on summarizing and persuasive writing.

● **Make lists.** Your child might write down movies she wants to rent or songs she'd like to download. Making lists like these will show her the practical side of writing. 👍



Study guide basics

Get your child used to making study guides, and you're likely to see better grades on her next report card. She'll learn and retain information as she prepares the guides—and studying will be much easier. Suggest these steps to your middle grader:

1 Gather textbooks, class notes, handouts, and quizzes. Use a highlighter or sticky notes to mark important facts, dates, names, and terms.



2 Determine the best format for your material. You might try:

- an outline for facts (the causes of the Civil War, achievements of famous women)

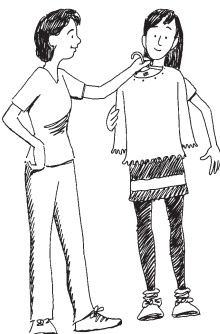
- a timeline for historical events (World War II, the civil rights movement)
- a table for comparing and contrasting (properties of solids, liquids, and gases)
- a two-column chart for vocabulary (math terms, Spanish-English definitions)

3 Create your study guide on a computer or on paper. Either way, use color (highlighters, thin markers, color fonts) to make key words and dates stand out. Add clip art, create diagrams, or draw pictures—these extras will help lock the information in your mind as you study. 👍



Q & A Fashion sense

Q My daughter wants to wear the latest fashions, but I think they are too revealing. What should I do?



A Let your daughter know that she can be stylish and modest at the same time. For example, a midriff-baring shirt can be layered over a longer shirt so the tummy is covered. Mini-skirts might be paired with leggings.

Longer shorts could be worn with big shirts and a belt cinched at the waist.

Make a shopping date with your daughter. Talk to salespeople and check store displays for clothing she likes and you can live with. Look for accessories (scarves, costume jewelry) that will make outfits more fun for her. With some compromise, you should be able to find a middle ground. 👍

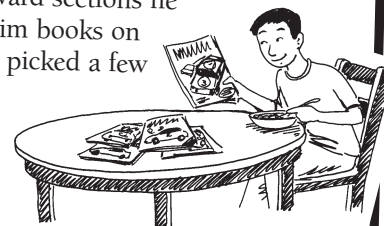
Parent to Parent A reading habit

The older my son Jonathan got, the less he read. I was concerned, so I asked the school librarian for ideas.

First, Mrs. Cruz said we should leave lots of reading material—books, magazines, newspapers, even comic books—all around the house. “If they’re lying there, he’ll pick them up,” she advised.

Second, she suggested that I stop at the library to return books when we’re out together. Once inside, she said, steer him toward sections he might like. Since Jonathan loves cars, I showed him books on NASCAR races and drivers. I was happy when he picked a few to check out.

Finally, Mrs. Cruz told me to discuss the books I’m reading with Jonathan. That will give him a chance to talk about what he has read that day—and give us a reading habit to share! 👍



Support for teachers

When your child sees that you support his teachers, he’s more likely to succeed in their classes. Here are a few ideas.

Say good things

Compliment your middle grader’s teachers. *Examples:* “Your teacher certainly knows a lot about geography.”

“It’s nice of your math teacher to stay after class to help you.” Comments like these will help your child think highly of his teachers.



Keep an open mind

Avoid jumping to conclusions if your child complains. Instead, ask for more information. (Did he follow instructions? Was he the only one to get in trouble?) Remember, there are two sides to every story. Call or e-mail the teacher to follow up.

Offer help

Ask teachers what you can do at home to support learning. For instance, they might suggest that you quiz your middle grader for tests and talk regularly with him about what he’s studying. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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