

Parents®

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Payson Junior High School
Counseling

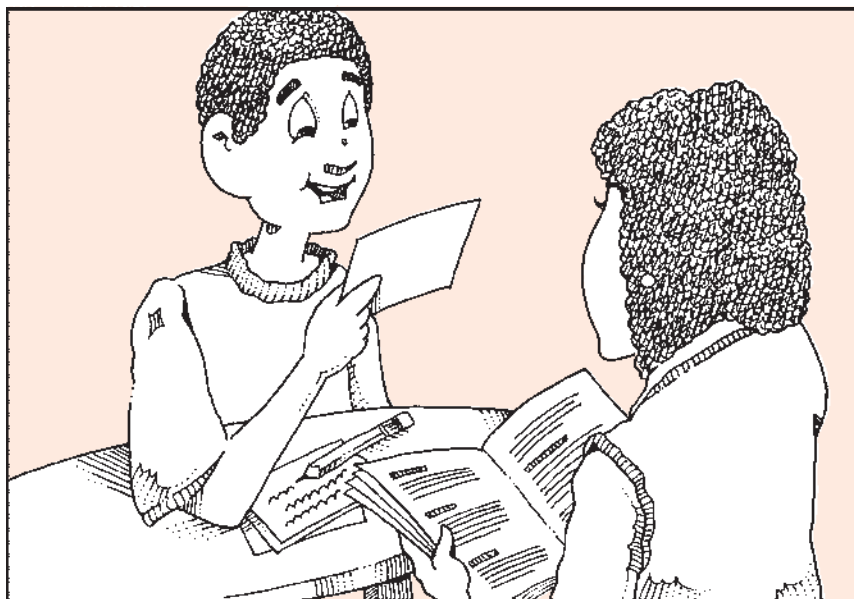


Illustration by Joe Mignella

Successful Students Know That Good Listening Aids Learning

Most kids are visual learners. They learn by watching, reading and writing.

But students spend most of their time in class listening to the teacher. To do better in school, they need to listen better.

To help your child become a better listener:

- **Ask, "What's the key idea?"**
Good listeners remember the most important ideas. After your child finishes reading or listening to something, see if he can tell you what the key ideas are. Encourage him to do the same thing when he listens to lectures in class.
- **Paraphrase during dinner.**
As you eat, take turns describing something that happened

during the day. Or share something you learned from the news. The next person to speak must correctly restate what the previous speaker said before he can tell his experience or share his news.

- **Help your child make** one-fact note cards. Read aloud a paragraph or section from your child's textbook. Ask him to write on an index card one important idea or fact he heard. As he learns to tune in to main ideas, he creates flash cards of facts to review for tests.

Source: Michele Borba, *Parents Do make a Difference*, 1999 (Jossey-Bass, 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, 1-888-762-2974), ISBN: 0-7879-4605-2, paperback, 272 pp., \$18.

Building Character

Help Your Child Learn to Handle Unkind Teasing



Middle schoolers can be unkind, and learning to deal with teasing is an important skill for your child at this age. It's especially important if your child stands out at school because of an ethnic difference, a learning disability or a physical trait.

Share these suggestions with your child:

- **Practice standing up** for yourself. It's hard work to accept teasing without getting angry or sad. But these emotions are exactly what the teaser hopes to achieve. Instead, practice looking someone in the eye and saying something like, "You can talk, but I don't have to listen." Then walk away.
- **Choose friends carefully.** Not everyone is a teaser. In fact, most kids look down on those who are cruel to others. Stick with a couple of supportive friends.
- **Be a friend.** Don't tease others. If you treat others unkindly, you can expect to be treated that way yourself. Being kind and friendly to everyone will eventually earn you a lot of respect.

Source: Gary Fisher, Ph.D., and Rhoda Cummings, *The Survival Guide for Kids With LD*, (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 217 Fifth Ave. North, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 5540, 1-800-735-7323) ISBN: 0-915793-18-0, paperback, 112 pp., \$10.95.

Helping Middle Schoolers Cope

Help Your Child Stay Focused In a World Full of Distractions



Middle schoolers have so many new interests—school, extracurricular activities, how to fit with peers—that concentrating on any one thing may become difficult.

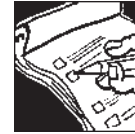
That's especially true if the one thing is her homework or a chore you've asked her to do.

Try these ideas to help your child get focused:

- **Be supportive** at homework time. This is different from sitting down with your child and walking her through her assignments. Instead, encourage and monitor your child from a slight distance. Let her know you believe she can do the work. Offer a snack or drink after she's worked for a chunk of time. Offer suggestions for finding help—a book, the Internet, a homework hotline.

- **Keep it short and sweet.** You may find yourself thinking that your child's attention span hasn't been this short since she was a toddler, and you're probably right. Before you're halfway through a lecture about feeding the dog, your child has tuned out. Instead, try, "Anne. Dog. Please."
- **Encourage note-taking.** Writing down instructions has helped many a middler—and plenty of adults too! Do this for your child at home, and suggest she do it at school when her teacher is giving directions to her or to the whole class.

Source: Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarrese, *The Roller Coaster Years*, 1997 (Broadway Books, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036, 1-800-733-3000), ISBN: 0-553-06684-6, paperback, 308 pp., \$15.95.



Parent Quiz

Are You Using Sound Discipline Practices?

Take this quiz to see if you are disciplining your child appropriately. Give yourself five points for something you do often, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

___ **1. I am consistent.** For example, I don't punish my child for being late one day and then let it slide the next.

___ **2. I am fair.** I don't use major punishments for minor mistakes.

___ **3. I use natural** and logical consequences. My child will have to ride a rusty bike if he forgets to bring his bike in when it rains.

___ **4. I respect my child.** I correct him in private, not in front of his friends.

___ **5. I act quickly.** I want my child to see a link between actions and consequences.

How did you score?

Twenty or above means you are striving for effective discipline. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Check the quiz for suggestions.

Student Safety

Have a Talk About School Policies for Prescription Drugs



More and more kids are giving or selling prescription drugs to friends at school.

When they get caught, many get suspended. Often, a record goes in their permanent file. It says they're guilty of passing out a controlled substance.

Make sure you tell your child:

- **Sharing medications** is against school policy. It can violate state law.
- **Sharing is dangerous.** Some children end up in the hospital after taking others' drugs.

MIDDLE SCHOOL Parents *still make the difference!*

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help
Their Children ISSN: 1523-1283.

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Publisher: *John H. Wherry, Ed.D.* Senior Editor: *Jeff Peters*. Writers: *Kristen Amundson & Maria Koklanaris*. Editor: *Pat Hodgdon*. Head of Translations: *Michelle Beal*. Staff Editors: *Betsie Millar & Rebecca Miyares*. Editorial Assistant: *Pat Carter*. Illustrator: *Joe Mignella*. Staff Translators: *Kelly Maldonado & Dolores Quintela*. Marketing Director: *Laura Bono*. Business Manager: *Sally Bert*. Subscription Manager: *Barbara Peters*. Subscription Associates: *Peggy Costello, Catalina Lalande, Pam Beltz & Louise Laurence*. Business Assistant: *Donna Ross*. Marketing Assistant: *Joyce Gben*. Circulation Associates: *Marsha Phillips & Kay Brownell*.

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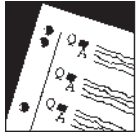
a **FREE** electronic newsletter from the editors of **Parents Still make the difference!**

Issues are automatically sent to your e-mail inbox every other Tuesday.

A wonderful complement to the resources found here, "On Being a Parent" shares a short inspirational essay on the challenges and rewards of parenting, written by a parent for other parents.

You'll find the signup box on the left side of the page at www.parent-institute.com/parent.





Questions & Answers

Q: I hear a lot about “peer pressure” in middle school. How can I keep my daughter from being pressured to smoke, drink or do other things she shouldn’t?

A: It’s common to associate peer pressure with destructive behaviors. But peers can be a positive influence, too. They can influence your daughter to stay safe, do well in school and be kind to others.

Guide your daughter toward friends who will provide positive peer pressure. Positive friendships can be the best shield a child can have against negative influences.

Be sure to:

- **Get to know the kids** at school. Volunteer at school. Be a chaperone for school field trips or dances.

“Positive friendships can be the best shield a child can have against negative influences.”

- **Encourage** your daughter’s interest in new endeavors. After-school clubs or programs are a good, safe place for her to make new friends with similar interests.
- **Encourage your daughter** to invite friends to your house. Being at home can make her more comfortable when getting to know someone new. Plus, you’ll get to know the kids, too.
- **Get to know the parents** of your daughter’s friends. Introduce yourself on the phone or at school events. Try to coordinate similar ground rules for your children to follow.
- **Encourage activities** with church, sports and other groups outside of school.

—Luann Fulbright,
The Parent Institute

Making Decisions

Encourage Children to Listen to Their Inner Voices Before Acting



The ability to think things through is critical to good decision-making. Without this, we would act based only on our whims—not the best choice for most situations.

To think things through, your child will need to develop and listen to her inner voice. Our inner voice represents the thoughts we have when presented with a decision. It tells us the good and bad points of each choice, and helps us predict what would happen once a choice is made.

You can encourage your child to think things through by:

- **Asking questions.** “Why do you think that happened?” “What could you have done differently?” Questions like these

encourage children to review their behavior and come up with different solutions.

- **Supplying information.** “I’ve read that wearing a bike helmet can protect the brain in case of a fall.” This encourages your child to consider consequences. At this age, it often works better than a direct command.
- **Making lists.** Next time you have a decision to make, model list-making for your child. Write down the pros and cons of each choice. Use your list when it’s time to choose.

Source: Elisa Medhus, *Raising Children Who Think for Themselves*, 2001 (Beyond Words Publishing, Inc. 20827 N.W. Cornell Road, Suite 500, Hillsboro, OR 97124-9808, 503/531-8700) ISBN: 1-58270-047-8, paperback, 292 pp., \$14.

Developing Thinking Skills

Help Your Middle Schooler Put Time & History in Perspective



Middle school kids are still developing their sense of time. They learn about many historical events. But they often can’t put them into historical perspective.

Which came first: The Roman Empire or the Aztec Empire? The Reformation or the Renaissance?

To help your child develop perspective, encourage him to:

- **Make a giant timeline.** Stretch a string or cord across his room. As he learns interesting historical dates in school, he jots the information on index cards. Then he hangs the cards on the timeline in chronological order.
- **Keep a “Book of Centuries.”** Put blank pages in a loose-leaf notebook. Each page represents

100 years. For each century, he enters interesting information about historical events. He can add illustrations, biographical sketches of major figures, etc. You can help keep him motivated. Occasionally ask him for a “tour” of his timeline or book. Let him know when it helps your own sense of time.

“

“Don’t point your finger to the heights your children should go. Start climbing and they will follow.”

—Wilfred A. Peterson

Your Child and You

Don't Make Promises to Your Child That You Cannot Keep

Do you tell your child you'll pick her up at a certain time, then forget? Say you'll go to her track meet, then cancel?

It's not a crime to break promises to our kids. But doing it too often can cause your child to think you don't care about her. She'll learn to distrust you and perhaps others. And she won't feel obliged to keep her promises to do schoolwork or anything else.

To teach your child the value of keeping promises:

- **Keep your word.** Always do what you say you will do. Return what you borrow. Pay your debts.
- **Be honest.** Don't tell your child "maybe" or "later" if you really mean "no."
- **Discuss** what a promise means to you. For example, should promises always be kept? When should you make them?

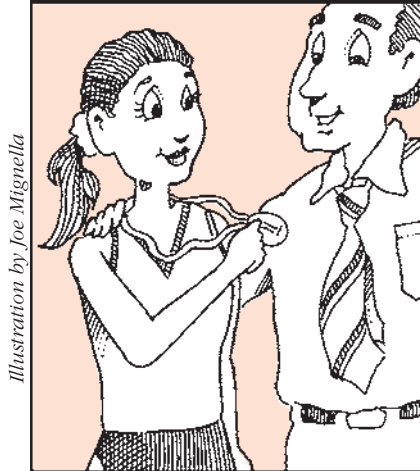


Illustration by Joe Mignella

- **Think of promises** other people didn't keep. How did that make you or your child feel?
- **Explain why**, if you can't keep your word. Also say how you'll make it up to your child.
- **Compliment your child** when she keeps her promises.

Coping With Middle Schoolers

Keep Your Child's Safety in Mind As You Increase Independence



Part of you thinks your middle schooler is ready for more freedom. But another part worries about his safety.

When deciding how much freedom to give your child, consider:

- **His maturity.** Some middle schoolers will always go straight to their destination, calling you when they get there. Others will dawdle along the way and forget all about calling. If your child is less mature, be more cautious about leaving him alone.
- **The situation.** Of course, your decision about whether to let a child do something depends on what he asks to do. A rock

concert may be out of the question but two hours with a friend at the library would be okay.

If you decide to grant a freedom, tell your child to:

- **Ask before going anywhere**, or before making any changes to a plan you have agreed on.
- **Get your permission** before going anywhere with another adult.
- **Follow** the family emergency plan if necessary. Make sure your child knows whom to call if he cannot reach you.

Source: Ann Colin Herbst, "Independence Days," *Parents*, September 2003, Gruner + Jahr USA Publishing, 375 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017, 1-800-727-3682.

Working With Your School

Be Patient, Creative When Trying to Contact Teachers



It is just as important to be in touch with your child's teachers now as it was when your child was in elementary school. And while it is very likely that the teacher welcomes your interest, it may take her a bit longer to get in touch with you than you are used to.

Remember, an elementary school teacher usually has about 25 children each year. A middle school teacher may have 100 or more.

Here are some ways to get in touch:

- **Give the teacher** more than one way to reach you. A home number, a work number (if available) and a cellular phone number (if available) are all good pieces of information for the teacher to have. E-mail (if available) may be another good way to communicate.
- **Keep trying.** Both you and your child's teacher have busy schedules, so you may end up playing "phone tag." But it's worth it to call several times if you'll find a way to help your child succeed in school.
- **Get to the point.** Complaining that the teacher took too long to call you back does nothing to help your child. Say, "it's great to hear from you. I would really like your feedback on Mark's class participation this quarter," or whatever is on your mind.
- **Plan a follow-up call.** One phone call may not be enough to deal with the issue. If you need to talk again, set a date and time. Ask the teacher if you may call her at that time.

Source: Dorothy Rich, *What do we say? What do we do?* 1997 (Tor Books, an imprint of Tom Doherty Associates, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010, 212/388-0100), ISBN: 0-312-85433, paperback, 286 pp., \$12.95.