

Parents®

still make the difference!

Payson Junior High School
Counseling

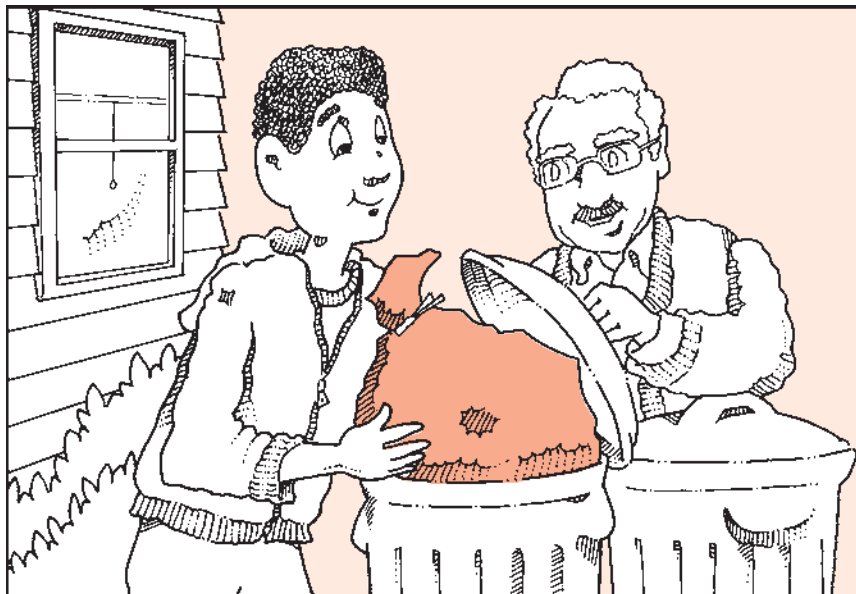


Illustration by Joe Mignella

Dealing With the Tough Issues

Positive Parents Give Children an 'I Can' Attitude



Are you concerned that your child isn't working up to her potential at school?

You can help. First, make sure you have realistic expectations for your child's age and level of development. If you expect too much, your child will feel intimidated. She'll think, "I can't," rather than, "I can."

Then do these things to foster an "I can" attitude in your child:

- **Love your child** for who she is, not what she does. Never imply she's more valuable when she shines or performs well.
- **Help your child** see herself as a capable person. Help her identify and build on her strengths—areas she enjoys and does well in.
- **Help your child** set her own goals—not yours.
- **Encourage your child** to try doing things on her own. This communicates that you believe in your child.
- **Teach your child** to assess her own behavior. Help her see the connection between what she wants and her actions.
- **Say it's okay** to make mistakes. That's how we learn. Share some of your own mistakes and lessons learned.

Source: Linda Mitchell, RN, "Thanks for Helping Me Succeed in School," Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, www.tdprs.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/pdf/ecap-24.pdf.

Help Your Middle Schooler Rise Above Worry & Anxiety

Young adolescents are often self-centered. They are preoccupied with their own worries and insecurities.

But self-centeredness isn't all bad. Kids must think of themselves to set and reach goals.

Your middle schooler needs your help to rise above worries, and balance the priorities of thinking of self and others.

To help, ask your child to set three goals at the start of each day: one for school, one for self and one for service to others.

Have him take five minutes to answer three questions:

1. **What's the most important thing I can do today for school?** For example, should I do a report or prepare for a test?

2. **What's the one best thing I can do to help myself?** Eat well? Exercise? Get more sleep? Other?

3. **What can I do today** to help another person? Be nice to an unpopular classmate? Help my little sister with homework? Take out the trash for an elderly neighbor?

Be sure to ask about the priorities your child sets. Praise effort, accomplishments and unselfish acts.

Also discuss obstacles. Talk about how your child might overcome them.

Source: Linda & Richard Eyre, *Teaching Your Children Values*, (Fireside, a division of Simon & Schuster, 100 Front St., Riverside, NJ 08075, 1-800-323-7445), ISBN: 0-671-76966-9, paperback, 256 pp., \$13.

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children

After School

Having a Collection Boosts Academics & Self-Esteem



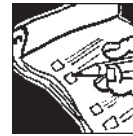
Starting or keeping a collection is a great after-school activity for your child. You may think your child's piles of rocks, trading cards or dolls are nothing more than clutter. But collecting has many benefits for your child.

Having a collection helps your child:

- **Practice key school skills.** These include finding patterns and putting things into categories.
- **Feel in control.** Your child can be in charge of her collection.
- **Build self-esteem.** Dr. Mel Levine, one of America's top learning experts, says being an authority on some subject—whether it's dolls, baseball cards or old coins—is important to every child's development.

- **Build social skills.** Many children have collections. Encourage your child to put the word out that she has one, too. It's likely that a fellow collector will want to talk to her about what she collects, why and how. That conversation could lead to a good friendship.
- **Want to learn.** If your child enjoys her collection, she will probably want to find out more. Encourage her to do some research. The library will probably have some interesting books and articles about what she collects. They may even have a magazine for collectors.

Source: Vicki Poretta & Marian Edelman Borden, *Mom's Guide to Raising a Good Student*, 1997 (John Wiley & Son, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, 1-877-762-2974), ISBN: 0-02-861942-0, paperback, 183 pp.



Parent Quiz

Are You Helping Your Child Become a Good Test-Taker?

Standardized tests are a fact of life in schools today. Take this quiz to see if you're helping your child do his best at testing time.

Give yourself five points for something you do often, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

- ___ **1. I urge my child** to get plenty of sleep the night before testing.
- ___ **2. I make sure my child** has breakfast the morning of testing.
- ___ **3. I encourage my child** to put serious effort into the test.
- ___ **4. I encourage my child** to talk to a teacher if he is showing signs of test anxiety.
- ___ **5. I express faith** and confidence in my child before he leaves for school on test day.

How did you score?

Twenty or higher means you are a great support during testing periods. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Check the quiz for ways to help your child during test time.

Making Decisions

Questions Lead to Good Decisions



To make good decisions, kids must consider the consequences of their choices.

Help your child by asking:

- **How will the choice** you have made affect others? Will you cause physical or emotional harm?
- **How do you feel** about the choice you have made?
- **What might happen next?** Will the outcome of your decision be positive or negative?

Source: Myrna B. Shure, *Raising a Thinking Preteen*, 2001 (Henry Holt and Company, 115 W. 18th St., New York, NY 10011, 1-800-488-5233, ISBN: 0-8050-0664-2X paperback, 254 pp., \$14.

MIDDLE SCHOOL Parents *still make the difference!*

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

For subscription information call or write: The Parent Institute[®], 1-800-756-5525, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. Fax: 1-800-216-3667. Or, visit our Web site: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute[®], a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2004 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: *John H. Wberry, Ed.D.* Executive Editor: *Jeff Peters*. Senior Editor: *Betsie Ridnour*. Writers: *Kristen Amundson & Maria Koklanaris*. Editor: *Pat Hodgdon*. Head of Translations: *Michelle Beal*. Staff Editor: *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, Pam Beltz & Louise Lawrence*. Business Assistant: *Donna Ross*. Marketing Assistant: *Joyce Gben*. Circulation Associates: *Marsba Phipps, Catalina Lalande & Diane Perry*.

Warning: It is a violation of federal copyright law to reproduce **anything** from this newsletter except as provided by the **exact terms** of your subscription. Questions? Call: The Parent Institute, (703) 323-9170.

Sign up for "On Being a Parent,"

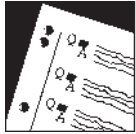
a **FREE** electronic newsletter from the editors of **Parents Still make the difference!**

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: My daughter spends all her allowance, then asks for more money. How can I get her to be more financially responsible?

A: Middle schoolers live in the present. They want what they want when they want it. If parents constantly dole out money, they will never learn its value.

Take these steps to teach your daughter money management skills:

- **Reduce the need** for your daughter to ask for money. Discuss the difference between needs and wants. Make sure her allowance adequately covers necessary lunch money, snacks, clothes, school and other agreed-upon activities. Include a little extra for savings.

“Discuss the difference between needs and wants.”

- **Encourage saving money.** Let her have the experience of wanting something without having the money to have or do it. She'll learn she needs to save to fulfill her wishes.
- **Teach budgeting skills.** Make a chart. List days of the week down the left column. For each day, insert amounts for planned and actual spending. Subtract spending from planned spending to see if she's under or over her budget.
- **Talk about ways** your daughter can cut expenses and add income.

Involve your daughter in family financial decisions such as choosing a restaurant that gives the best value for the money. Include her in long-range budgeting, too.

—Luann Fulbright,
The Parent Institute

Encouraging Writing

Become Familiar With Writing Formats Your Child Should Use



In middle school, your child will be asked to write both fiction and non-fiction. And he'll have to be able to use several different formats for each kind of writing.

Here are some kinds of writing your child should start to practice:

- **Creative writing.** This can be a story, a poem or a play—anything your child chooses to make up. Creative writing is fun because your child can use imagination.
- **Explanation.** This is also called *expository* writing. It is used when the writer wants to share information with the reader. It can be how to put something together or how to solve a problem. Clear writing is the

key. The reader of an explanation should come away informed, not confused.

- **Personal essay.** This is a written monologue. In a personal essay, your child can tell about something he believes or has experienced. Clear, organized language is still important.
- **Persuasive essay.** This is a written way to try to convince the reader that the writer's opinion is the correct one. It should include examples that support the writer's opinion. It may also include examples to show why opposite opinions are wrong.

Source: Drew and Cynthia Johnson, *Homework Heroes*, 2002 (Kaplan Publishing, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 100 Front Street, Riverside, NJ 08075, 1-800-323-7445), ISBN: 0-7432-2259-8, paperback, 176 pp., \$10.

Building Social Skills

Teach Middle Schoolers the Value of Encouraging Others



The most well-liked kids in school don't ignore or put others down. Frequently, they praise and encourage their peers.

To motivate your child to be encouraging:

- **Brainstorm a list** of phrases your child can use to build others up. “Great idea!” “Good answer.” “Nice game!”
- **Use the “Three-Praise Rule.”** Ask your child to praise other kids at least three times a day. The number will keep him focused on the importance of finding things to praise.
- **Make praising a family habit.** Write encouraging notes to each other. Leave them under a

pillow, in a lunch bag, or read them aloud at dinner.

Source: Michele Borba, *Parents Do Make a Difference*, 1999 (Jossey-Bass, a division of John Wiley & Son, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, 1-877-762-2974), ISBN: 0-7879-4605-2, paperback, 246 pp., \$18.

“

“Without question, what you do at home . . . makes all the difference when it comes to what kind of student your child will be.”

—V. Poretta & M. Edelman Borden,
Mom's Guide to Raising a Good Student

Motivating Your Child

Use Specific Expectations to Motivate Your Middle Schooler

Your child's best chances for success happen when expectations are clear and specific. That way, she is more likely to know exactly what to do and she is less likely to disappoint you.

Your child may not admit it at this age, but she still wants to please you. Doing so motivates her. Disappointing you discourages her and may cause her to stop trying to learn.

So avoid general statements such as, "You need to do better in school." Your child is left thinking, "How am I supposed to do that?" Instead, simply tell her. "This quarter, let's agree that you will work an extra 10 minutes a night on math. And I'll give you a practice quiz every Thursday. I believe you can do it, and I'm here to support you."



Source: Don Fontenelle, Ph.D., *Keys to Parenting Your Teenager*, 2000 (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 250 Wireless Boulevard, Hauppauge, NY 11788, 1-800-645-3476), ISBN: 0-7641-1290-2, paperback, 215 pp., \$7.95.

Physical Development

Concern About Blemishes Can Affect Your Child's Schoolwork



During the middle school years, children often develop acne. As their bodies change, their oil glands work overtime. As a result, when they look in the mirror, they often see pimples.

Sometimes children who have pimples become embarrassed at school. They may choose not to speak up in class or interact with other students.

Now is the time to teach your child to treat his skin properly.

Encourage your child to:

- **Wash his face** every morning and before bed, using a gentle soap. He should also wash if he has been sweating. Suggest that he massage the soap all the way up to his hairline. This is the area where pimples often form.

- **Keep his hair clean** and off his face.
- **Use oil-free soaps** and shampoos, or special products made for acne-prone skin.
- **Protect his face** from the sun with a hat.
- **Avoid touching his face** unless necessary. Ask him to try his best not to pick at or squeeze pimples.
- **Talk to you** if he thinks the problem needs more attention. You may want to call his doctor for advice on how to treat anything beyond very mild acne.

Source: Andrea Marks and Betty Rothbart, *Healthy Teens, Body and Soul*, 2003 (Fireside, a division of Simon & Schuster, 100 Front Street, Riverside, NJ 08075, 1-800-323-7445) ISBN: 0-7432-2561-9, paperback, 384 pp., \$14.

Homework

Students Avoid Last-Minute Panic With a Written Plan



The end of the school year is approaching, and that means end-of-the-year projects. To avoid last-minute panic, help your child develop a plan.

With a written plan, your child can rely more on himself, and less on you. This will give your child a sense of accomplishment. He'll learn skills he can use in high school and college.

Here is a sample plan for getting projects completed on time. Have your child:

1. **Pick a topic** and have his teacher approve it. This step may not be necessary if the teacher assigns a topic to your child.
2. **List the steps necessary** to get the project completed. For example, do research, take notes, write a rough draft, write a second draft, do illustrations, and make a final copy.
3. **List the help he will need** from parents or others. For example, "I need a ride to the library on Tuesday, and again next Saturday."
4. **Set a deadline** for completing each step of the project.
5. **Collect the materials** required for the project.
6. **Follow the steps** for getting the project finished. Start with research and then proceed through the other steps. Meet all deadlines.
7. **Turn in completed project** on or before the due date.

If your child follows these steps, he should complete his project on time with a minimum of stress.

Source: Marguerite C. Radencich, Ph.D., and Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D., *How to Help Your Child With Homework*, 1997 (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc. 217 Fifth Avenue North, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 55401-1299, 1-800-735-7323), ISBN: 1-57542-006-6, paperback, 198 pp., \$15.95.