

# Parents®

*still make the difference!*

Payson Junior High School  
Counseling



Illustration by Joe Mignella

## Help Your Child Cope With the Middle School Social Scene

So many changes are happening during middle school that even the best adjusted children can feel disoriented. And for a child who is slower to adjust and adapt, who may be less mature than his peers, these changes can be highly difficult.

To support a child who may feel out of place, you can:

- **Assure him** of your unconditional love. A child who cannot yet keep up with the social whirl his peers are entering may quickly lose self-esteem. He needs to know that home is a safe, loving haven for him.
- **Listen to his concerns.** Make time to talk to your child each day. For example, talk in the car

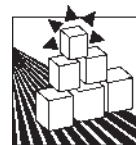
and just before sleep when the lights are off. Your child will probably open up more if he does not have to make eye contact with you.

- **Support his interests.** Maybe your child is still into his rock collection while his peers are into music and girls. Ask him questions about the collection. Let him know you value the things he values. If he has a friend with similar interests, encourage him to invite his friend over to your home.

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., \$14.95.

### Building Responsibility

## Are You Raising a Child Who is a Self-Manager?



Kids who do well in school are usually self-managers. Use this list to see if you're helping your child develop into a self-manager. Self-managers:

- **Do things for reasons** other than getting another person's approval or reaction. They act out of a desire to learn, do or finish something, for instance.
- **Understand cause and effect.** They can connect their behavior to the consequences of their behavior.
- **Accept the consequences** of their bad choices. They don't blame others.
- **Know how to make** good decisions. They define a problem or opportunity. They consider alternatives, then select the best solution.
- **Are less vulnerable** to peer pressure. They care about what others think, feel and need. But they make decisions based on what *they* think is best, even if their friends disagree.
- **Take the initiative.** They don't wait for parents or teachers to nag them. They act without threat or promise of reward.
- **Resolve conflict** without aggression. They seek win-win solutions.

Source: "Characteristics of Responsible, Self-Managing Children," Counselor's Corner, [www.lex5.k12.sc.us/lmes/CounCorn/respons.htm](http://www.lex5.k12.sc.us/lmes/CounCorn/respons.htm).

## Discipline

# Use Strategies to Eliminate Your Child's Rude Back Talk



As the parent of a middle school child, you may have days where it seems as if everything you say is the wrong thing. Even an innocent comment may be met with a rude, arrogant or scornful reply from your child.

You may be angry and frustrated. But the best thing is to avoid a big show of emotion. Try these strategies:

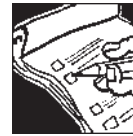
- **Use "I-messages."** Anything that begins "you always" or "you never" or even just "you" may sound like an accusation to your child. And nothing will gear her up for a fight faster than that.

Instead, put the emphasis on your own feelings. Example: "I get very frustrated when the trash piles up," instead of "You never take out the trash!"

- **Become a broken record.** Don't get into a debate about why she can't go to a concert without you, just this once. Instead, repeat yourself. "The rule in our house is no unchaperoned concerts." When she complains, respond again, "The rule in our house is no unchaperoned concerts."
- **Say something nice,** then walk away. There are times when you just won't be able to get any further with your child until she gathers herself.

Try, "I know you're very upset, and that makes me sad for you. But you're being so rude to me that I can't talk to you right now. I'll be happy to discuss things more in a little while."

Source: Ann Svensen, "Did That Come Out of My Child's Mouth?," [familyeducation.com](http://familyeducation.com/article/print/0,1303,65-2483,00.html?obj_gra), [http://familyeducation.com/article/print/0,1303,65-2483,00.html?obj\\_gra](http://familyeducation.com/article/print/0,1303,65-2483,00.html?obj_gra).



## Parent Quiz

### Are You Helping Your Child Handle Stress?

Here's a quiz to see if you are helping your child overcome middle school anxieties.

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

- \_\_\_ **1. I encourage my child** to let me know if he is feeling worried or uncertain.
- \_\_\_ **2. I help my child** keep on top of assignments.
- \_\_\_ **3. I encourage my child** to participate in sports or to get regular exercise.
- \_\_\_ **4. I make sure my child** gets enough sleep and eats well.
- \_\_\_ **5. I stay in touch** with my child's teachers about how he is handling things at school.

### How did you score?

A score of 20 points or above means you are taking significant steps to keep your child's stress level low. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Check the quiz for some suggestions.

## Healthy Habits

# Encourage Your Child to Clean Out A Cluttered Locker



By now, many kids' lockers look like garbage dumps. They're unsanitary. The clutter can cause your child excess stress when he can't find what he needs.

Suggest that your child:

- Sort "like" items.
  - Keep only what he will use. (Ask himself: "Do I really need this?")
  - Throw or give away the rest.
- Once he's decluttered his locker, encourage him to do a two-minute cleanup at the end of every week.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL **Parents** *still make the difference!*

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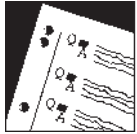
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## Questions & Answers

**Q:** When I talk to my son, he just grunts or mumbles at me. Or sometimes he responds with, “I kno-o-o-w!” How can I communicate with him?!

**A:** Middle schoolers aren’t easy to talk with. They’re seeking independence, and just your presence reminds them they’re not in charge. Saying, “I know,” can mean: Leave me alone. Don’t intrude.

Doing these things can break down communication barriers:

- **Model good communication,** values and behavior. Don’t preach about them.
- **Don’t talk down to your son.** He’s not too young to understand religion, politics, dating and other topics.
- **Ask questions** instead of *telling*. “Do you think there might be another way to do this?”

**“Don’t offer advice in response to everything your child says.”**

- **Include your son** in discussions of family matters such as vacation choices, the purchase of a new car, etc.
- **Use props** that can foster communication. Look at old pictures together. Listen to his music or watch his favorite TV shows without being critical. Share a news article on a current event. Read the same book, or share the same hobby.
- **Really listen** when your son does talk. Don’t interrupt, and avoid being judgmental.
- **Don’t offer advice** in response to everything your child says. Be a sounding board.
- **Praise your son** when he does open up to you.

—Luann Fulbright,  
*The Parent Institute*

## Encouraging Writing

# Give Your Child Strategies for Organizing Writing Assignments



The hardest part of writing is usually getting started. Having a strategy to organize thoughts and begin getting them down on paper can help your child get over this hurdle.

If your child enjoys learning best with words, an outline can help her get started on a paper. If she enjoys learning best with pictures, she can try a mind map. Both of these work for fiction and non-fiction writing.

### To do an outline, have her:

- **Write down** her first main idea. Number it with the Roman numeral I.
- **List the supporting points** she wants to include about her main idea below Roman Number I. Use indented capital letters: A, B, C, etc.
- **List additional details** under the A, B, C supporting points using indented numbers, 1, 2, 3, etc.

- **Include smaller details** below the numbered additional details using indented lowercase letters a, b, c etc.

- **Write down** her second main idea using Roman numeral II. Then repeat the format.

### To do a mind map:

- **Write down** her overall topic in the center of a page. Have her draw a big circle around it.
- **Write down** supporting points for her main idea around the big circle in smaller circles. Have her draw lines between the main idea circle and each supporting point circle.
- **Write down additional details** for each supporting point in smaller circles. Have her connect these detail circles to the supporting points circles with lines.

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.

## Solving School Problems

# Don’t Allow Your Child to Make Excuses for Missing Homework



Kids make lots of excuses for not doing homework. Some are tall tales like “The dog ate it.”

Here are common excuses and how you might respond:

- **“I ran out of time.”** Help your child set priorities, and break large tasks into manageable ones. Suggest he complete most important or hardest tasks first. See if he’s overscheduled.
- **“I forgot.”** Help your child create a system to remember. Provide an assignment book. Suggest making a “To Do” chart.

- **“I can’t do it.”** Meet with the teacher or tutor. Try to determine if your child really doesn’t know how to do the work. Get help if needed.
- **“I wasn’t sure** I was supposed to do it.” Suggest your child always call another student when he’s unclear about assignments.
- **“The computer lost** my homework.” Have him save his work frequently.

Source: Rita Emmett, *The Procrastinating Child*, 2002 (Walker & Company, 435 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014, 1-800-289-2553), ISBN: 0-8027-7636-1, paperback, 192 pp., \$10.95.

After School

## You Can Protect Your Child By Becoming a 'Hands-On' Parent

**P**arents who are "hands on" versus "hands off" have a better relationship with their kids—according to research. And their kids are half as likely to smoke, drink alcohol or abuse drugs. Consequently, these kids do better in school.

Being hands-on means you have clear rules and expectations for what your child does after school. Kids who go home and do homework after school, for example, are the least at risk of substance abuse.

As a "hands-on" parent, you should:

- **Act more like a parent** than a "pal" to your child.
- **Know where** your child is, with whom, and what she's doing at all times. Expect your child to tell you.
- **Monitor** what your child views on TV and the Internet.
- **Ban music CDs** with offensive lyrics.
- **Expect your child** to do regular chores.



Illustration by Joe Mignella

- **Eat dinner** together as a family. Turn off the TV.
- **Tell your child** you would be extremely upset if she used drugs.

Source: "National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VI: Teens, 2001," National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, [www.casacolumbia.org/usr\\_doc/52809.pdf](http://www.casacolumbia.org/usr_doc/52809.pdf).

Physical Development

## Expect Worries, Questions as Your Child Experiences Puberty



Puberty, the biological process that gradually transforms the body of a child into the body of an adult, is different for each child. However, nearly everyone has some concerns about it.

To help your child:

- **Reassure him.** Yes, what he's going through is normal, even if it's not happening to him exactly as it happened to his best friend.
- **Offer information.** Your child may have specific questions that you don't feel comfortable answering on your

own. If this happens, suggest he speak with his doctor or a health teacher. If he doesn't want to do that, then ask the librarian to recommend a book you both can read.

- **Encourage him to be patient.** Bodies change in their own good time and they can't be rushed. Remind your child that puberty can take up to five years from start to finish.

Source: Paulette Bourgeois & Martin Wolfish, M.D., *Changes in You & Me*, 1994 (Andrews and McMeel, 4906 Main St., Kansas City, MO 64112, 1-800-851-8923) ISBN: 0-8362-2815-4, paperback, 64 pp.,

Focusing on the Future

## Encourage Your Daughter to Enjoy Math & Science



Your child deserves a full range of options to consider about her future. That includes the still male-dominated technical fields involving math, science and computers.

Even if these aren't your daughter's first choice, pursuing success in these courses can sharpen her mind, boost her self-esteem, and give her additional career choices to think about.

Here are some ways to help:

- **Encourage your daughter** to take the highest-level math and science courses she can.
- **Urge her** to participate in solo math and science competitions. Girls often enjoy working in groups where they don't have to be the center of attention. But it's good to shine individually, too.
- **Avoid making statements** such as, "I was never any good at math either."
- **Point out real-life math** and science. It's hard to be a wise shopper if you don't use math. Baking is based on chemistry. The idea is to show her that math and science are not scary. They are a key part of our everyday lives.

Source: Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret Sagarese, *The Roller-Coaster Years*, 1997 (Broadway Books, a division of Random House, 1540 Broadway, New York, New York 10036, 1-800-726-0600), ISBN: 0-553-06684-6, paperback, 336 pp., \$15.95.

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***"If you give your son or daughter only one gift, let it be enthusiasm."***

—Bruce Barton