

Parents®

still make the difference!

Payson Junior High School
Counseling

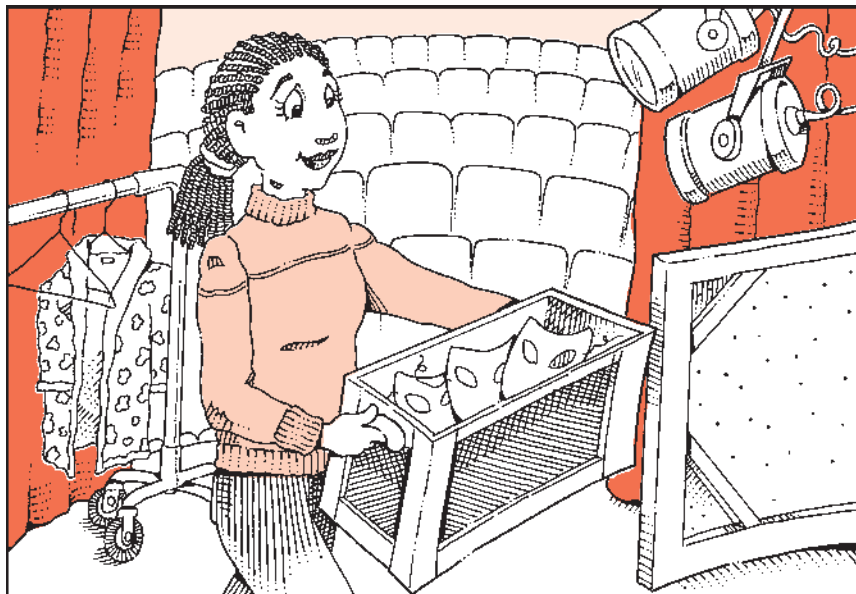


Illustration by Joe Mignella

Help Middle Schoolers Bounce Back From Disappointments

In middle school, the risks kids must take increase. There are more students trying out for spots on sports teams, performance groups and special activities. So more children get passed up. They don't "make the cut."

Kids can't help but get the message that they're "not good enough."

To help your child take disappointments in stride:

- **Talk openly about feelings** of loss. Say it's normal to feel sadness and anger when rejected. Discuss healthy ways of working through these feelings.
- **Put defeat in perspective.** It's not unique to middle school. As long as people desire progress throughout their lives, they open themselves up to rejection.

- **Encourage your child** to put her eggs in more than one basket. If her first activity of choice doesn't work out, her second or third might.
- **Suggest an alternate plan.** If your child can't have one role related to an activity, consider other possibilities. If not a role in the play, for example, perhaps she could help out with set designing.
- **Boost your child's self-esteem.** Praise her strengths. Encourage involvement in other activities she does well.

Source: Lisa M. Schab, L.C.S.W., "Helping Kids Take Disappointments in Stride," *Chicago Parent*, http://www.chicagoparent.com/CP_pages/archive/Tweens%20and%20Teens%20Archive/TT0101.htm.

Making Decisions

Help Your Child Use Five Steps for Making Decisions



Some decisions can be made in a moment. But others require time and thought. You can help your middle schooler learn to make difficult decisions.

Stress that "making no decision" is not a good option. If your child avoids making decisions, then he is willing to just let things happen to him. He won't learn responsibility and he could be hurt badly.

Encourage your child to use these steps to make decisions:

1. **Pretend** you have already made the decision. What has happened? What are the consequences?
2. **Learn about your choices.** Even if you are just deciding which movie to see, read some reviews. Make an informed choice instead of guessing.
3. **Make the decision** after getting your information and thinking about the consequences.
4. **Think about your decision.** How did it turn out?
5. **Learn from the decision.** Would you make the choice again? What would you do differently?

Source: Peter L. Benson, Judy Galbraith and Pamela Espeland, *What Teens Need to Succeed, Practical Proven Ways to Shape Your Own Future*, 1998 (Free Spirit Publishing, Inc., 217 Fifth Ave. North, Suite 200, Minneapolis, MN 5540, 1-800-735-7323), ISBN: 1-57542-027-9, paperback, 368 pp., \$15.95.

Coping With Middle Schoolers

Expect Your Child's Focus To Be on Friends, Not Family



Not every middle school child is the same. But for a majority, this age brings a huge focus on peers and on the self. Parents will almost certainly end up feeling confused. And they may also end up feeling hurt.

It is normal for middle school children to:

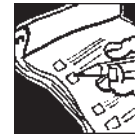
- **Make an effort** to avoid parents. Age 13, especially, has been called the age of the closed door. Expect your child to spend a lot of time behind one.
- **Seem completely unaware** that their parents have needs. You could be sick. You could have piles of work to do. Your child cares nothing for this. The only thing that matters to him is that you drive him to soccer practice—NOW.

- **Live their lives** completely according to what their friends will think. Middle schoolers can spend hours obsessing over one comment a friend made—or failed to make.

This obsession can extend to what other middle schoolers will think of their parents. You can be the most presentable person in the world. But your child will make every attempt to avoid being seen with you if he thinks his friends might find you weird.

So what to do? Wait. This stage doesn't last long. As your child matures, he'll turn back to you.

Source: Anthony E. Wolf, "Get out of my life, but first could you drive me and Cheryl to the mall?" *A Parent's Guide to the New Teenager*, 2002, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 19 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003, 1888-330-8477), ISBN: 0-374-52853-5, paperback, 240 pp., \$13.



Parent Quiz

Are You Helping Your Child Improve Listening Skills?

Here's a quiz to see if you're helping your child practice good listening. Give yourself five points for something you do often, zero points for something you never do—or any score in between.

___ **1. I model good listening** for my child by making eye contact and giving the speaker my full attention.

___ **2. I ask my child** to repeat things back to me if I'm not sure she understood.

___ **3. I do not interrupt** my child. I expect the same courtesy from her

___ **4. I discuss** classroom listening strategies with my child.

___ **5. I listen** to my child's opinions on current events.

How did you score?

A score of 20 points or above means you're doing a good job encouraging your child to be a careful listener. Fifteen to 19 is average. Below 15? Check the quiz for some ideas to fostering good listening skills.

Community Service

Volunteer Activities Reinforce Good Reading Skills



Hospitals and homeless shelters need helpers to read to children. Share these tips when your child volunteers:

- **Read slowly.** Let the child take in the story and pictures.
- **Read with expression.** Use different voices for characters. Make sounds.
- **Talk about the story.** Predict what might happen. Ask what the child liked.
- **Be willing to read** a favorite story many times.
- **Let the child read** to him.

MIDDLE SCHOOL Parents *still make the difference!*

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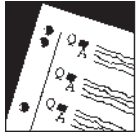
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Have an Idea to Share?

Do you have an idea for parents that should be in this newsletter? The editors of *Parents Still make the difference!* Middle School Edition are looking for practical ideas about how parents can help their children.

Parents Still make the difference! pays \$25 for each original idea published, and you will receive credit in the article. Please send ideas written in English.

Send ideas to *Parents Still make the difference!* Editorial Dept., P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474. Materials sent cannot be returned. You can also submit your idea online at www.parent-institute.com/ideas/pmd/.



Questions & Answers

Q: My son wastes time, then doesn't have enough time to do homework or chores. Plus he's often late. What can I do?

A: Your son is not alone. Middle schoolers often underestimate the time it takes to do things. And many don't plan their time. They wait until they're "in the mood" to begin an assignment.

Most need gentle guidance in how to manage time better. Encourage your son to:

1. **Create a weekly chart** for planning his time. List days of the week along the top. List hours of the day, in 30-minute intervals, down the left side.

"Create a weekly chart for planning his time."

2. **Make a list** of what he wants to accomplish each week. Include a set amount of time for homework, practice times, outings with friends, etc.
3. **Break down any large tasks** into smaller ones. Estimate the time each will take.
4. **Insert each task** and other activities into his time planning chart. Be sure to allow time for free time and the unexpected.
5. **Plan for no interruptions** like the TV or telephone.
6. **Time tasks.** Use a timer to see how much time tasks actually take.
7. **Set a clock alarm** to signal it's time to leave for school or take medication.
8. **Set a timer** to go off when study time's up or when it's time to take a break.

Have your child keep a time chart for a week. Then talk about how he could spend his time more wisely.

—Luann Fulbright,
The Parent Institute

Developing Thinking Skills

Better Concentration Helps Middle Schoolers Learn More



Better concentration will make your child a more efficient learner. Good concentration helps students focus and understand more. Then they can learn more, often in a shorter period of time than before.

To help your child concentrate better, have her:

- **Pick a quiet,** comfortable place to study.
- **Work in short chunks** of time, no more than 30 minutes. Twenty minutes usually works best.
- **Take a short break** occasionally. Walk around or get a glass of water.

To help your child stay focused during work time, have her:

- **Write down any thoughts** that may bother or distract her.

Then put them aside. When she's finished, she can return to them.

- **Stop herself** when she feels distraction coming on. Have her say "No!" to herself out loud and then get back to work.
- **Check the time** when she can no longer keep herself from becoming distracted. Have her see how much time has gone by. Mark down the number of minutes she was able to concentrate. Have her set a goal to concentrate next time for at least one more minute than she did this time.

Source: William R. Luckie and Wood Smethurst, *Study Power: Study Skills to Improve Your Learning & Your Grades*, 1997 (Brookline Brooks, P.O. Box 1047, Cambridge, MA 02238, 1-800-666-BOOK) ISBN: 1-57129-046-X, paperback, 128 pp., \$15.95.

Computers & the Internet

Your Child Can Make School Projects Shine With Free Clipart



The Internet now makes it easy for students to find pictures and other graphic resources to enhance their presentations and papers.

The following Web sites have thousands of images your child can use for free:

- **Clip Art Gallery** at <http://school.discovery.com/clipart/>. This award-winning site is organized by topics. Includes tips on how to copy clip art to your computer's hard drive.
- **The Amazing Picture Machine** at www.ncrtec.org/picture.htm. Your child can search by word for a particular picture—say *horse*, *Venus*, *sunflower* or *President Kennedy*.

- **GraphicMaps.com** at www.worldatlas.com/clipart.htm. Has images of continents, flags, outline maps, USA, globe and world.
- **Pics4Learning** at www.pics4learning.com/. This site has thousands of great images for school projects.
- **Education Place** at <http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>. Offers many graphic organizers such as a flow charts and story mappers.

If you don't own a computer, you can use one at your local library. A librarian will be available to show your child how to download and place a graphic in a document. For a small fee, your child can also print the document at the library.

Reinforcing Learning

Stress Reading, Grammar to Build Skills for Language Arts

Good reading, oral language and writing skills will help your child in all his school subjects and beyond.

Here are some suggestions for sharpening them:

- **Encourage your child** to read for pleasure. Don't worry so much about *what* he reads—it is most important *that* he reads. Reading teen and sports' magazines, if these are what he likes, is much better than not reading at all.
- **Do your best to speak** using correct grammar. It is often hard to remember to do so. But you will be providing your child with an excellent example.
- **Have fun with words.** For example, pick a prefix, such as *anti-*. Then challenge your child to see how many words he can each come up with that include this prefix.
- **Learn literature from movies.** Your child will probably read a classic play during middle

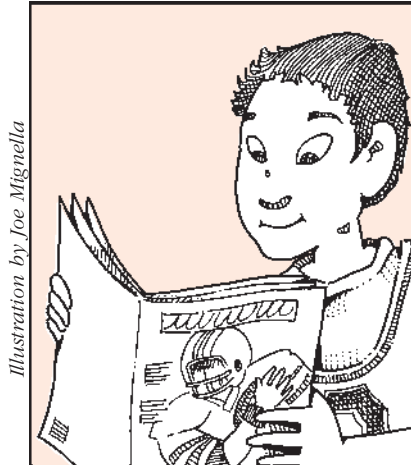


Illustration by Joe Mignella

school. Rent the movie version or borrow it from your library. Have your child read the play. Watch the movie together. Then compare the two.

Source: Drew and Cynthia Johnson, *Homework Heroes*, Grades 6-8, 2001 (Kaplan Publishing, Published by Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, 1-800-223-2336) ISBN: 0-7432-2259-8, paperback, 176 pp., \$10.

Building Character

Understanding the Value of Things Teaches Appreciation



Appreciation is a quality that must be nurtured in children.

It's more than saying *thank you*. To be really appreciative, a child must understand more than just the dollar value of something. He must also appreciate the intangible value of one's home, an education or a parent's trust.

Kids who understand the value of what others do for them don't say *thank you* just because they've been told to a thousand times. They say it because they feel thankful.

To foster appreciation:

- **Model it yourself.** Express how a thoughtful act or gift makes you feel.
- **Talk with your child** about what your family values and what it doesn't.
- **Don't fulfill** your child's every request. Having to wait will build your child's appreciation.

Source: Denise C. and Mark S. Weston, *Playwise: 365 Fun-Filled Activities for Building Character, Conscience, and Emotional Intelligence in Children*, 1996 (Penguin Putnam, 405 Murray Hill Pkwy, East Rutherford, NJ 07073), ISBN: 0-87477-808-5, paperback, 304 pp., \$15.95.

Dealing With the Tough Issues

A Good Therapist Can Help With Your Child's Problems



Do you ever feel "at wit's end" over your child's problems? If so, it may be time to consult a therapist.

Therapists are mental health workers. They can be psychologists, social workers or psychiatrists (who are medical doctors). All are trained to diagnose and treat problems.

Therapists can treat:

- Anxiety, depression or stress.
- Attention disorders.
- Developmental disorders.
- Learning disabilities or other academic problems.
- Eating disorders.
- Intense or unusual anger.

To find a good therapist:

- Ask your child's doctor.
- Speak to other parents you trust.
- Speak to professionals at your child's school.

To select a therapist, find out:

- The therapist's background and training.
- What area the therapist claims as a specialty.
- How you can reach the therapist if there is an emergency.
- The therapist's office, billing and insurance policies.

A good therapist can help your child learn to:

- Form and improve problem-solving skills.
- Make and keep friends.
- Find ways to cope when things get tough.
- Turn negative thoughts into more positive ones.
- Deal with feelings about a major change, such as divorce.
- Use strategies to become a better student.
- Use strategies to deal with fears.

Source: "Finding the Right Therapist," *The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter*, August 2002, Manisses Communications Group, Inc., 208 Governor St., Providence, RI 02906, 1-800-333-7771.