

MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions to ask your child this month.

- ▶ Who's your favorite teacher now?
- ▶ Do you understand what the words peer pressure mean?
- ▶ What do you want to be when you grow up?
- ▶ What three words would you use to describe yourself?



SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

Spring is here—and the change between winter and spring isn't the only transition you and your family should be thinking about. With the school year wrapping up in the next couple of months, now is a great time to start the process of supporting your child's transition to the next grade level.

- ▶ Be aware of how your child is doing in all subjects and classes. If you aren't sure or haven't seen a recent progress report or report card, contact the school.
- ▶ If your child is transitioning to a new school building, start learning about the new school. Visit the website together and check out the school calendar.
- ▶ Even if your child is not transitioning to a new school next year, a little nervousness or even sadness about leaving this year's teachers and classmates behind is normal. Reassure your child that he/she will have just as much fun next year, be with many of the same friends, and also have the opportunity to make new friends.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Ask your child what his/her favorite parts of this school year have been so far. Also talk about the coolest things he/she has learned and the friends he/she has made.

SUPPORTING RELUCTANT READERS

Reading is a critical part of academic success. But not every student is a good reader, or loves to read. If your child isn't an enthusiastic reader, here's how you can help.

- ▶ Show your child that reading is a way to pursue personal interests. Regularly take your child to the library to help him/her find books on topics that are of interest to him/her.
- ▶ Have family reading time—20 minutes when everyone in the family reads something of interest: books, magazines, comic books, etc.
- ▶ Read a book together. Take turns reading, switching off pages or chapters.

EVERYDAY ACTIVE LEARNING

Active learning is learning that engages a child in the learning process (e.g., exploring personal interests, problem solving, asking and answering questions).

This month's active learning tip is to explore the outdoors. As the weather warms up, now is a great time to explore the changes in nature that are happening right now.

- ▶ Go for nature walks and point out the signs of spring you see.
- ▶ At night, go stargazing and try to find constellations. If you're able, point out planets as well.
- ▶ Plant something. Go to a garden center or lawn and garden store and let your child choose anything he/she would like to plant. Encourage your child to take care of the plant during this spring and summer.

ENCOURAGE FOCUS

When your child is working on homework, remove as many distractions as possible. Turn off the TV and make homework time a quiet time in your household.

STAYING ON TRACK WITH HOMEWORK

This time of year, it's common for many students to start looking ahead to the end of the year, and this often means attention to homework falls by the wayside.

- ▶ Pay particular attention to ensure that your child doesn't rush through homework, and that his/her homework is always completed thoroughly.
- ▶ Keep checking to make sure all homework gets done properly and on time. All homework (even the work late in the year) is important.



HANDLING HURT FEELINGS

Peer relationships can sometimes be difficult for middle school children. Friendships and peer alliances often change as a result of varying maturity levels and changing interests. Shifting relationships, or the end of friendships, can be hurtful, especially for the child who didn't initiate the change.

Here's how you can help your child deal with hurt feelings.

- ▶ Encourage your child to talk about what has happened, and about how he/she is feeling. Listen, provide support, and acknowledge that your child's feelings are valid.
- ▶ Help your child deal with his/her feelings and keep things in perspective. For instance, if your child says he/she feels bad because a friend didn't want to be his/her partner for a class assignment, you might talk about the things you see that make your child fun and likable. You might also assure your child that things will likely be better tomorrow.
- ▶ Remind your child how special you think he/she is, and let your child know that you will always be there for support.
- ▶ Children with a good self-image are less affected by social ups and downs. Help your child develop his/her talents and interests, and look for ways to build your child's self-esteem and confidence.



TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Middle schoolers often strive for independence from their parents, while seeking group acceptance from their peers.

Peer relationships are often very important to middle school students, and your child might begin feeling the pressure to fit in. At some point, your child may be tempted to do something he/she knows isn't right (e.g., be mean to another student, do something he/she isn't allowed to do, or even participate in a risky behavior).

- ▶ Talk about peer pressure, and encourage your child to listen to that inner voice that tells him/her what's right and wrong.
- ▶ Practice with your child various ways to say "no" to something he/she doesn't want to do. Remind your child that he/she always has a choice, and that he/she never has to change to be liked.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Teach social skills

Talk about the proper way to address adults, and encourage your child to look people in the eye when speaking to them.

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

CAREER CORNER

Focus on Business careers. Discuss different kinds of business careers (salesperson, store manager, customer service, business owner). Talk about how people in these careers use English and math in their jobs, and discuss what traits are needed to succeed in business.

BONDING WITH YOUR CHILD: FUN THINGS TO SHARE AND DO

A strong parental bond is key to student success!

Talk with your child

- ▶ Talk to your child about the person you admire most, and why. Ask your child to talk about someone he/she admires.

Spend time together

- ▶ Take a scavenger hike. Make a list of things to look for on your hike (e.g., a squirrel, robin, yellow wildflower, fallen tree, big insect).
- ▶ Make popcorn and have a family game night.

CHARACTER MATTERS: FAIRNESS

Most middle schoolers understand and are concerned about the concept of “fairness,” often as it pertains to how they’re treated compared to other kids.

Discuss the importance of fairness. For example, you might ask your child to tell you about a time he/she felt treated unfairly, and how that made him/her feel. Also, ask your child to talk about a time he/she treated someone else unfairly, and how that person must have felt.

THINK ABOUT IT: HEALTHY HABITS

It’s never too early for your child to develop healthy habits. Think about the following as they relate to your child.

- ▶ Is your child getting the recommended 9-12 hours of sleep a night?
- ▶ Does your child have healthy eating habits?
- ▶ Do you do outdoor activities with your child, such as hiking, playing sports, or taking walks?
- ▶ Does your child engage in fun physical activity on a regular basis?

If you answered “no” to any of the above, not to worry. Work on small daily changes to build healthier habits into your child’s life. Here are a few ideas.

Institute a “no technology rule” an hour before bedtime so your child has an easier time falling asleep.

Have nutritious food and snacks available, and look for ways to involve your child in physical activities.

Go for a short family walk on warm evenings, or turn on the music and have a dance party.

