

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Spelling help

Is your middle grader a poor speller? Try playing games like Boggle, Hangman, and Quiddler. His spelling muscles will get a workout, and the entire family can have fun on a dark winter's night.

DID YOU KNOW?

Skipping breakfast makes it harder for kids to remember facts and solve problems. Encourage your child to eat before school by offering foods that are out of the ordinary, such as bean tortillas or peanut butter and banana sandwiches.

Conference time

Attending parent-teacher conferences is helpful—even if your child is doing well. Why? Teachers can often tell you how your middle grader gets along with peers, as well as ways you can support learning at home.

Worth quoting

"Only I can change my life. No one can do it for me." *Carol Burnett*

Just for fun

Teacher: What can you tell me about the great artists of the sixteenth century?

Student: They're all dead!



Your *real* middle grader

When you look at your child, you may see a middle grader with blue hair and an attitude. But you might also see a healthy youngster in search of herself. The difference? A little perspective.

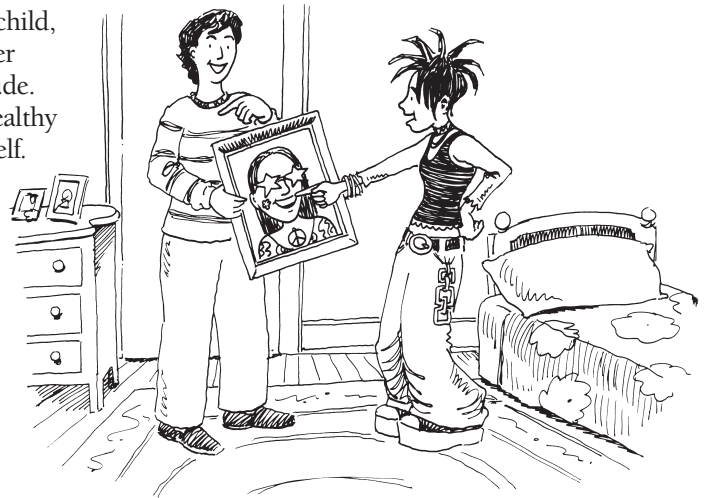
Truth is, the middle years are a time when kids adopt different styles and opinions to see if they "fit." Often such shifts in appearance and behavior are a normal part of growing up, rather than rebellion.

Here are some suggestions to help you and your child handle these changes.

Count to 10. As long as a new look doesn't endanger your middle grader, consider a low-key attitude. Take a deep breath and count to 10, if necessary. After all, a little hair dye will wash out in a few days. Don't let appearance spark an argument that keeps you both fuming for days.

Show support. If your child's grades are good, thank her for the hard work instead of lecturing her. Sure, her use of "cool" words might not impress an employer, but that high-powered interview is a few years away. Now is an important time for her to express her individuality.

Remember when... Parents were middle graders once, too. Keep



in mind the phases you went through as a kid. You might even share a laugh about your antics to ease tension after a busy day—it's hard to be mad at each other when you're both laughing. 👍

Spotting stress

Parents watch little ones for signs of sickness, such as fever. As kids get older, spotting signs of stress becomes important, too. Some studies indicate that stress is on the rise among young adolescents. In addition to normal growing pains, middle graders can feel added pressure from drugs, violence, and family strife.

Signs of stress include:

- frequent headaches
- dizziness
- upset stomach
- teeth grinding
- recurrent illness
- depression
- angry outbursts
- loss of appetite



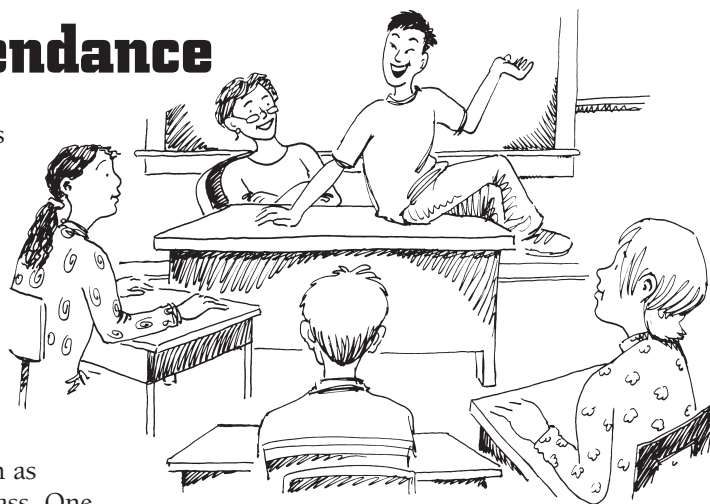
If your middle grader often displays several of these symptoms, it may be time to seek help. Talk to the school counselor or your family doctor about ways to cope with stress. 👍

Active attendance

Attending school means more than just sitting in a classroom. To learn effectively, your middle grader must keep his mind active throughout the lesson. Share these tips.

■ Prepare

Being prepared means your child is ready to learn as soon as he sits down in class. One way he can arrive prepared is by reviewing each day's class notes as part of his evening studying. This reminds him of what was discussed in the last class and offers a preview of the upcoming lesson.



■ Pause

Have your youngster take a minute before class to gather her thoughts. What was her homework about? Based on her reading, what can she expect to learn today? Was anything unclear in her notes? Answering questions like these can focus her mind on classroom activities.

■ Participate

Encourage your middle grader to contribute to class discussions. He might comment on something he read for homework or on another student's opinion. Discussing the topic boosts your child's understanding. It's also a good way to show the teacher that he's paying attention. 👍

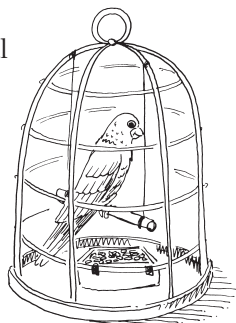


Sharing compassion

Learning to be compassionate is an important lesson for all kids. Here are some ways to help your middle grader become a more caring person.

Consider a pet.

Caring for an animal can teach your child to think about the needs of others. Start small (a hamster, fish, or bird), and see how he does.



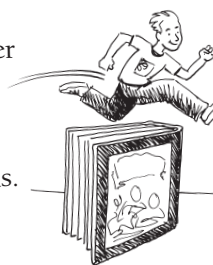
Offer help. Do you extend a helping hand to others in need? Volunteering in a home for the elderly or reading to small children can demonstrate the importance of kind acts. *Tip:* Invite your middle grader to join you next time you help out.

Talk about loss. Discuss a family tragedy in the neighborhood, such as an unexpected death. Exploring such hardships can make your child more aware of others' suffering. 👍

Q & A Reading repairs

Q My middle grader gets frustrated by long reading assignments. How can I help make reading easier for him?

A There are several things you can do. Consider these suggestions.
 If an assignment takes a long time because your child reads the same lines over and over, he could place a ruler under each line to keep track of what he's reading.
 If comprehension is difficult, suggest that your middle grader take notes as he reads. He can use the notes to rephrase the assignment in his own words.
 If your child stumbles on unfamiliar words, have him read with a dictionary close by so he can quickly look up definitions.
Note: Remember to give your son lots of encouragement as his reading skills improve. 👍



Parent to Parent Stop swearing

The first time I picked up my daughter from soccer practice and heard the language she used with her friends, I was shocked. I had no idea Mary spoke like that!

"You never tell Uncle Joe to stop cussing," she complained on the way home. My brother Joe could be outspoken at times. Since Mary only saw him twice a year, I didn't realize she had noticed.



When I told my husband, he said Mary was probably just trying to act tough around her friends. Together we explained to our daughter that cursing made her look negative. We told her that being in control means keeping her head instead of spouting off when something goes wrong.

I'm pleased to say that Mary listened to what we had to say. She may not always use acceptable language, but at least she knows where we stand. 👍

O U R P U R P O S E

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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