

April 2014

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Advance notice

Does your middle grader wait until the last minute to tell you that he needs a poster board for his project or a ride to a friend's party? Have him put requests like these in writing a few days ahead of time. For instance, he could add school supplies to your grocery list or email you about upcoming events.

What is "cutting"?

Some tweens and teens turn to "cutting"—injuring themselves with scissors or razors—to cope with anger, sadness, or stress. If you notice unusual marks on your child, ask her where they came from. Talk to her doctor or school counselor immediately if you suspect she is harming herself.

In the news

Sharing the news with your middle grader is a great way to spark discussions about everything from politics to the weather. Watch the national news together on TV, or listen to public radio in the car. Many kids find news events interesting because they're happening right now.

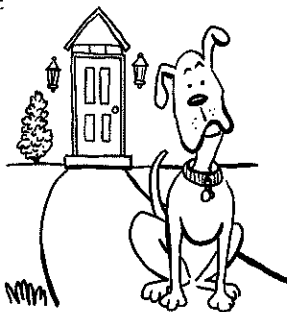
Worth quoting

"Why fit in when you were born to stand out?" *Dr. Seuss*

Just for fun

Q: What's the best way to stop a dog from barking in the backyard?

A: Put him in the front yard.



New ways to study

Trying different study techniques can keep your child motivated and help her learn more effectively. Here are ideas for adding variety—and a touch of fun—to her routine.

Phone a friend

Suggest that your middle grader list 10 questions about the chapter or notes she is studying and have a friend do the same. Then, they can quiz each other over the phone. Coming up with questions is an effective study method, and answering her friend's questions is good practice for taking a test. *Tip:* Encourage them to decide ahead of time when to call—it will give them a deadline for studying.

Talk to yourself

Reciting information out loud will help your child learn and remember it. Every few minutes, she should look away from her notes or textbook and state a fact she just read or define a vocabulary



word. Or she could tape herself studying aloud and play back the recording—speaking *and* listening will help cement the information in her mind.

Play games

Together, play a word game like Scrabble or Boggle with spelling words from the foreign language your tween is taking. Or use her study material for charades. She can write historical events or science terms on index cards for players to act out. 👍

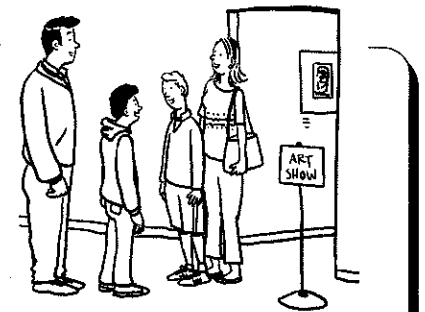
You're invited

Show your middle grader you think his school is important by attending events there. Try these tips:

- Check papers your child brings home for information about a school musical, a baseball game, or a math fair. Ask him which ones he plans to attend, and offer to go along. If he wants to go with friends, mention that you'll be there, too (alone, with your spouse, or with a friend).

- Consider going with your tween to a school event he's not part of, such as an art show or a poetry reading. You can meet other parents, and your youngster may discover a new activity or interest.

Idea: Carpool with other families. It's fun to have company, and sharing transportation helps those who might not have a ride. 👍



Inspired to write

Keeping a journal can improve your tween's writing skills and stretch his creativity. But many kids don't know what to write about. Share these questions to help him along.

Where am I? It's amazing the ideas your youngster might come up with if he carries a journal in his hip pocket. He could pull out his notebook on the train and imagine the life of another passenger. Or when he reaches a peak during a hike, he can rest and write a description of the mountain.



What are my favorites?

Encourage your child to list favorites (bands, foods, sports teams) in his journal. Then, he might pretend he is nominating something from his list for an award and explain why it deserves to win.

What if? Together, think of fun, thoughtful, or crazy questions that he could use as jumping-off points. He can write each one at the top of a blank page. *Examples:* "If only I lived in the 24th century, then I would..."; "One day that I'd really like to forget is when..."; or "I woke up to find that everyone had turned into an animal except for me..." 🍌



Activity Corner Chances are...

The whole family can enjoy this probability challenge—and it only *seems* simple.

Problem: Maria has 10 pens and 10 pencils in a cup. She pulls out a pen. Without looking, she reaches into the cup again. What is the probability that she will pull out a second pen? Is it 50 percent, more than 50 percent, or less than 50? (Most people will say 50 percent.)



Solution: Before Maria pulled out the first pen, 10 of the items—or 50 percent—were pens. But when she pulled out the second item, there were only 9 pens and 10 pencils. Since there were more pencils, her chance of getting a second pen was less than 50 percent.

Encourage your child to try this with her own pens and pencils. Then, take turns making up more probability challenges for each other to solve, and act them out to check the results! 🍌

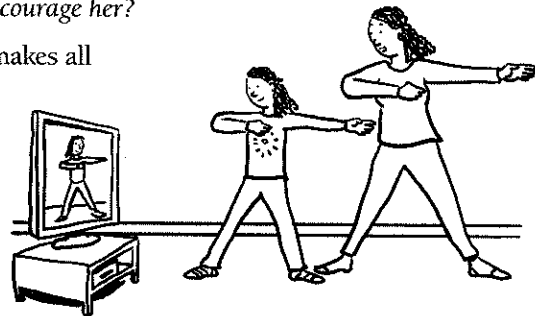
Q & A "I give up!"

Q *If something doesn't come easily to my daughter, she stops trying. The other day when she was struggling to finish a workout video, she said, "I'm just not an exercise person." How can I encourage her?*

A With many things in life, effort makes all the difference. You can explain that there's no such thing as an "exercise person," but there is such a thing as a "stick-to-it" person. If she keeps trying to do the workout video, she'll eventually be able to do the whole thing.

You can also tell her about a time you struggled with something, like learning to use specialized software for your job, but worked hard and figured it out.

Suggest that your daughter use this advice in school, too. Some subjects will be harder for her than others, but if she keeps at it, she will increase her chances of success in every class. 🍌



Parent to Parent Begin to volunteer

I volunteer in our community, and I mentioned to my son Owen how good it makes me feel. He said he'd like to try volunteering, too, so we looked into what he could do.

We quickly discovered that most places, like shelters, food banks, and senior centers, require a parent to participate with children. I was happy to accompany him, so Owen and I discussed the options and decided on helping out at a homeless shelter.

Owen has been reading aloud to children there for a few months now, and sometimes he plays games with them. He feels great about what he's doing, and I think he looks forward to the visits as much as the children do!

Plus, we're both happy that he's getting volunteer experience—and a taste of responsibility—before he's old enough to have a full-time job. 🍌



OUR PURPOSE

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

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