

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Solving conflicts

To teach siblings how to handle disputes without resorting to insults, try this. Establish ground rules (no name-calling or yelling). When arguments arise, they must allow each other to explain their side without interruption. Have them offer solutions and agree on one.

DID YOU KNOW?

Middle graders who are bullied are more apt to feel depressed and isolated from their peers. A recent study suggests that some kids view bullies as cool and victims as uncool. Encourage your youngster to spread the word: Bullies aren't cool.

Source: "To Curb Bullying, Make It 'Uncool,'" Reuters News Agency, December 2003

Math solution

The next time your child has a math assignment, share this tip. Suggest she copy the examples from her worksheets (without the answers) and solve them for practice. Then, if she gets stuck during homework, tell her to look over the examples again.

Worth quoting

"Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future."
Paul Boese

Just for fun



Q: What kind of chairs does the school band use?

A: Musical chairs!

Ways children learn

Is your child ever frustrated as he does his schoolwork? Sometimes the problem has to do with the different ways middle graders learn. For example, some kids are able to remember what they've read, while others need visual aids to prompt their memories.

Here are four types of learning styles and tips you can use to help your child be a successful learner.

Visual

This middle grader likes painting, puzzles, and doodling. He learns best by seeing information. *Tips:* Have him use colored pens and highlighters while studying. Suggest that he draw graphs to help him solve word problems in math.

Verbal

This type of learner loves words—reading, writing, and speaking. She learns through listening and talking about what she's heard. *Tips:* Tell her to take careful notes as she studies math and science. Have her read her class notes into a tape recorder to play back during study time.

Logical

This middle grader enjoys patterns, solving problems, and figuring out how things work. He learns best by reasoning—following a logical, step-by-step order. *Tips:* When he's studying grammar, suggest that he diagram sentences. Help him apply reading assignments to real-life situations.

Physical

A physical learner loves sports and games. "Hands-on," active

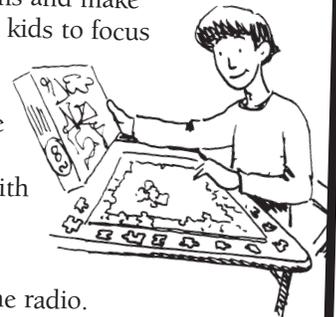


learning works best for her. *Tips:* Let her walk around, ride a stationary bike, or chew gum while reading. Encourage her to use a computer to type homework assignments. 👍

TV tug-of-war

Studies show that middle graders who watch TV violence are more likely to act aggressively. Too much television—with its sharp sounds, bright images, and frequent commercials—can also shorten attention spans and make it difficult for kids to focus at school.

What can you do? Share these fun TV alternatives with your middle grader:



- Listen to the radio.
- Go for a walk around the block and pick up litter.
- Read aloud to a younger brother or sister.
- Bake cookies or brownies.
- Write in your journal or diary.
- Do a jigsaw or crossword puzzle. 👍

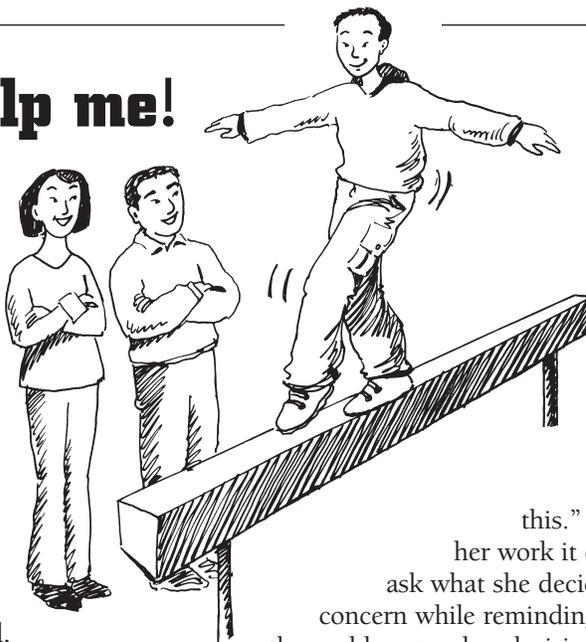
Don't help me...help me!

Middle graders often send conflicting signals to their parents. They seem to need help solving problems, but they don't want you to help them.

Sound confusing? Here are some suggestions.

Talk it over. Start by helping your middle grader figure out exactly what the problem is. Does he need help with an algebra problem—or the larger issue of how to keep his homework organized? Getting to the heart of the question can save a lot of frustration for both of you.

Offer advice. Once the problem is understood, offer advice on ways he could resolve it. But don't tell



him exactly how to fix something. Instead, give suggestions. *Example:* "If it were me, I'd try this..." You'll provide guidance (which he wants) without figuring out everything for him (which he doesn't want).

Give confidence.

Finally, encourage your middle grader. *Example:*

"I know you can solve this." Then, step back and let her work it out. Later on, you might ask what she decided. This will show your concern while reminding her that the solution to the problem was her decision. 👍

Less stress

Stress is a normal part of life. But if you or someone in your family is sleeping poorly or feeling overwhelmed or irritable, it may be time to take a break.

Share these ideas to reduce your family's stress:



■ **Breathe deeply.** It sounds simple, but taking several deep breaths can help calm your mind.

■ **Get outside.** Sitting quietly in the backyard or strolling through the neighborhood park can relax tense muscles.

■ **Doodle.** Take a minute to draw the first silly thing that pops into your head.

■ **Change your thinking.** Whenever possible, try to keep a positive attitude. Many worries aren't as important as they seem. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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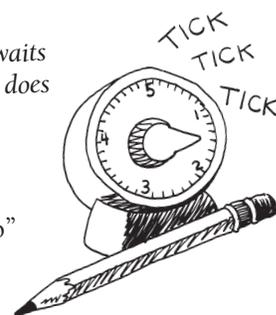
Q & A Ending procrastination

Q Whenever my middle grader has to study for a test, she waits until the very last minute to get started. Sometimes she even does her chores first! How can I help her?

A Explain to your daughter that procrastinating won't eliminate the need for her to study. To encourage her to make time for studying, suggest she create a daily "to do" list and put the tasks in order of importance.

She could also set a time limit, such as 20 minutes, for how long she will study before taking a short break. Dividing her studying into small blocks of time will make it easier for her to start—and finish—the assignment.

Finally, ask your middle grader if she's worried about failing. Sometimes kids avoid assignments if they feel pressured. If failure is an issue, consider offering your daughter extra help, such as a study partner or tutor. 👍



Parent to Parent The art of compassion

Several years ago, my son and I were on our way to a bowling tournament when we spotted an elderly woman trying to change a flat tire in the rain. At first I just kept going, but I couldn't help thinking that she probably could use some help.

As I turned around and drove back, my son asked, "What about the tournament?" I explained

that I thought it was more important for us to help someone in need than to make it to the tournament.

The lady was very happy that we had stopped. We introduced ourselves and changed the tire for her. By the time we were finished, we had missed most of the tournament.

My son often talks about that night. He learned the important lesson of putting others first. 👍

