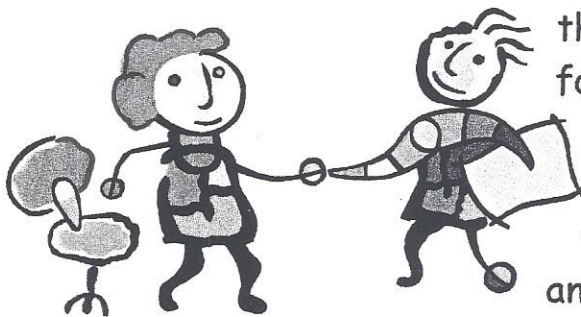


## Important Word to Parents

To raise a great kid, set a great example! Practice good etiquette yourself if you want to teach your child the same. He or she is watching you! In addition, if your child sees you involved in unethical behavior, your child will learn that unethical behavior is OK. If a child witnesses his parent lying to a police officer to get out of a ticket or overhears the parent discussing ways to cheat on income taxes, or sees the parent bringing home a briefcase full of office supplies for home use, that child will learn that its OK to lie, cheat, and steal.

## The Basics

Young people should know the importance of showing respect, and, therefore, should do the following:



- Stand when being introduced to someone.
- Pass the food first to guests and his or her parents.
- Wait to begin eating until everyone has been served.
- Do not interrupt others while they are talking, but wait until there is a pause to say what he or she wants to say.
- Offer to serve as "an extra pair of arms and legs": "Would you like me to reach that for you?" "Excuse me, but you dropped your gloves."
- Realize that in public places (in the mall, at the movies, on the bus, on the street) it is rude to make a lot of noise with friends that upsets other people.
- Never yell at others in the house (with hope that the parents don't yell either!).
- Remove hat or cap when entering a home, school, or any public building.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The middle school years are filled with changes for your children. Some of the most important changes have to do with their relationship with you and the family, as well as with friends. Here are some general characteristics of youth at this age.



### Family Relationships with Fifth and Sixth Graders

- Your child may display exaggerated emotions. He or she may be very happy, silly, very sad, or very mad and not much in-between.
- They may develop better relationships and increased trust with adults.
- Your child may be more willing to participate in family activities.

### Friend Relationships with Fifth and Sixth Graders

- Your child may become more conscious and judgmental of his or her own appearance.
- Your child may begin to conform to peer expectations.
- Your child and his or her friends may have secret codes, meeting places, cliques, etc., with other friends.
- Your child will begin to select friends based on mutual interests, as opposed to the childhood playmate next door.
- As your child begins to try to conform to both societal expectations and peer expectations, he or she may experience conflict between the two.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

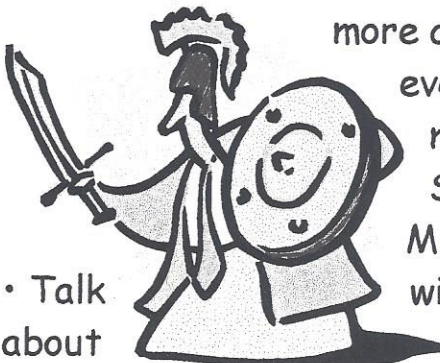
- Your awareness, limits, guidance, and approval of your teen are very important now. During children's newly emerging



cost money. I work hard for my money and I want you to have nice clothes to wear." "I do not want you to carry those two full glasses of milk at one time. I am afraid they will spill."

- Respect your child's need and right to grow up.
- Support your child's decision-making process. Help him or her see the pros and cons of various choices and likely outcomes. More and more let the child make decisions (if not life or death decisions). We all have a right to our successes and mistakes and to learning from our mistakes.

- Choose your battles! With teens trying out their independence more and more, it is easy to fight over everything. Ask yourself, "Does this really matter?"



Save your battles for the big issues.

#### MAKING A FRIEND

- Talk about making friends. Is it hard, easy, fun, or does he or she like to make new friends?
- Ask what kind of friends your teen liked before. "What did you like about him or her?"
- Have your teen think about the people he or she knows and how they make him or her feel.
- Let your teen know the positive effects of keeping the friends that make him or her feel good when he or she is with them.
- Let teens know that you have to be a friend, and that helps you to make a new friend.
- Let teens know that they should stay away from the ones who make them feel bad or get them into a problem.
- Let your teen know that we all often feel shy when making friends.
- Let your teen know that some things about him or her are good and "other kids will like you when they get to know you." Talk

more difficult for bullies to pick on you when you are in the security of a group of friends.

### **Advice for Parents**

#### **WHEN SOMEONE PUTS YOU DOWN**

- You can help your teen feel good by teaching him or her to say something like, "I like myself, and at least I don't have to stoop to saying mean things to others." Have your child keep saying this over and over again!
- When other teens say bad things to him or her, teach your teen to say, "That's what you think, but at least I don't try to hurt other people's feelings."
- Have your teen practice saying these things to you so that he or she gets used to them.
- If the sentences here do not work for your teen, make up others. He or she should be able to say something to help him or her feel better and to the other child who said something bad.
- Watch for signs of bullying:
  - Torn clothing
  - Fear of going to school
  - Changes in behavior
  - Decline in grades
  - Loss of appetite
  - Moodiness
- Take an active role in your child's schooling and activities.
- Work on boosting your child's self-esteem.
- Talk to school administrators if you suspect a problem.
- Keep a written record of any episodes what happened, where and when it happened, and who was involved.
- Never tell your child to "hit back." That not only can lead to more problems, it's a poor lesson in solving a dispute.



**Here is an additional list of tips successful parents used to ensure reason over rebellion:**

- Avoid any excessive or unnecessary discipline. Harsh punishment can result in hostility from the child.
- Provide punishment that "fits the crime" and that can be enforced. Do not tell your child that he or she is grounded for a month if you both know that neither of you will make it that long.
- Be certain that your punishment has a distinct beginning and end. Let your child know the exact time the "time out" or the "grounding" is to start and stop. (One parent made her child weed the garden as the "time out" punishment.)
- Take measures that teach a lesson. Example: A young person had to go without dinner when she came home long after dinner was over without notifying her parents.
- Stick to your word! As one parent says, "You want to hear your kids say to one another, 'Better do it, Mom or Dad means it!'"

Adapted from: *How Good Parents Raise Great Kids: The Six Essential Habits of Highly Successful Parents*, Alan Davidson, Ph.D., and Robert Davidson, Warner Books

**READING LIST:**

POSITIVE  
DISCIPLINE  
BY  
JANE NELSON,  
ED.D.  
HOW TO TALK  
SO KIDS WILL  
LISTEN, AND  
LISTEN SO KIDS  
WILL TALK  
BY  
ADELE FABER  
AND  
ELAINE MAZLISH

- Share common experiences.
- Cooperate with other parents so that peer pressure can be reversed and redirected into more healthy channels.
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents.

**Know how your youth will get to and from the party.**

- Assure your youth that you or a specific friend or neighbor can be called for a ride home. Make sure he or she has that telephone number.
- Discuss with your youth the possible situations in which he or she might need to make such a call.
- Encourage your child to leave a party:
  - if the host's parent isn't present.
  - if alcohol/drugs are available.
  - if any physical or property damage is being done.
  - if he or she is uncomfortable at all.

**FEELING GOOD ABOUT "ME"**

- Help your teen think about what is good about himself or herself, what people can see in him or her, and what he or she has that is good on the inside. Other things to think about:
  - How nice your teen is to others
  - How considerate, respectful, caring he or she is
  - How your teen keeps clean and neat
  - How reliable he or she is
- Talk to your teen about things you think are good and special about him or her. "You must be proud of yourself. I would be if I knew I could do that."
- Be sure that school problems get worked out.
- Show you care—actions speak louder than words.
- Know your neighbors, and be an active community member.





front of you so that it will be easy to say it to others, such as "I don't do drugs." Say family rules, such as, "I can't do that; I have to be home in ten minutes."

- Ask your teenager to list "rights and wrongs." If he or she can't, help him or her with the list.
- Try to get your teen to lead or to get his or her friends to do things that are okay. Think before you act!

## **EATING DISORDERS**

### **What are eating disorders?**

Eating disorders in young people are signals that something is wrong. These disorders usually involve a major preoccupation with food, eating, and weight control as a way of avoiding or dealing with emotions and problems.

### **Who can develop an eating disorder? Why?**

- Anyone can develop this disease. It is found more often in girls than in boys. The peak onset time of anorexia nervosa (self-starvation) is between ages 12 and 18.
- The causes of these diseases are complicated. Most sufferers experience conflicts over control in their family or personal lives. Food becomes the one area over which they alone are in control.
- Other factors include our society's preoccupation with weight and food, as well as the young person's parents' own preoccupation with weight and food.

### **Are eating disorders dangerous?**

Yes! People can die from eating disorders due to nutritional imbalances, cardiac abnormalities, and failures in body systems.

chance of overeating later in the day. Thus, people should not skip breakfast.

### **Ideas for Quick and Healthy Breakfasts**

- Build a breakfast or lunch around nutritional foods that are ready-to-eat or take little preparation time, such as fresh and canned fruits, yogurt, cheese, cold cereals, sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, crackers, instant breakfast drinks, and low-fat breakfast bars.
- People who do not feel hungry in the morning can breakfast by drinking juice, one-percent or skimmed milk, yogurt shakes, or instant breakfast drinks. Better yet, combine fruit juices or fruits with milk in a blender. Eating something is better than nothing.
- People who do not have time to eat should take breakfast food with them. Another time-saving strategy is to make breakfast and/or lunch the previous night.

### **EAT BREAKFAST! YOU WILL:**

BE MORE ALERT

GET BETTER GRADES

CONCENTRATE BETTER

PERFORM BETTER ON TESTS

### **Ideas for Quick, Healthy Snacks or Meals**

- Vegetarian pizza with low-fat cheese
- Veggieburger (in the frozen foods section)
- Baked french fries
- Hamburger with salad (use low-fat dressing)
- Sandwich with salad (use low-fat mayonnaise)
- Potato baked in the microwave (puncture with fork to prevent exploding)
- Tuna salad and chicken salad (low-fat mayonnaise)
- Baked chicken (no skin)
- Low-fat, low-sodium frozen dinners



**WHAT THE FACTS SHOW:**

- STUDIES SHOW THAT SKIPPING A MEAL DOES NOT HELP PEOPLE LOSE WEIGHT.
- SKIPPING BREAKFAST INCREASES THE CHANCE OF OVEREATING LATER IN THE DAY.

**Tell your child what is "normal"**

- Changes in the body are normal, but everyone's body doesn't change at the same time. Boys and girls grow at different speeds.
- Tell your child that there are many ways to show affection, love, and caring. Talking together can also be an intimate experience.
- It is important to teach the child to make good choices in what he or she does and says even when you are not around. You cannot be with your child all the time.

**KEEPING CLEAN**

**Make sure your teen has the things needed for keeping clean.**

**Tell how often one needs to use these things:**

- Toothbrush—morning and night
- Deodorant—every morning
- Shower or bath—once a day or when sweaty or dirty
- Hairbrush, comb—whenever hair looks messy (Show how to best brush or comb your teen's hair and how it should look when it's done neatly.)

**USE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS**

**To Parents and Guardians:**

Your role and presence in your child's life are very important. This includes demonstration of your love and respect; open and honest talk with your child; and continuous awareness of your child's whereabouts, activities, and friends. Strong family

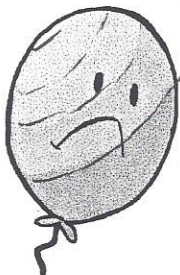
- **Severity**—How bad are the "bad days"? Moodiness is a common characteristic of teens, but intense rages, crying binges, or fearfulness may be a sign that something else is going on.
- **Endurance**—If these signs don't seem to go away, you might want to seek help for your child. Helpful numbers are found on this page.
- **Previous changes**—If your young person has undergone a big life change (e.g., parents' divorce, moving, death of someone close) or even a smaller change (e.g. going to a new school, peer problems), he or she is more vulnerable to developing depression.

**Here are some things to look for to determine if your teen may be suffering from depression:**

- Sad or "down" mood
- Increased irritability
- Intense worry
- A lack of interest or enjoyment in normal activities
- Low energy
- Withdrawal from interactions with others
- Increase in anger or verbal hostilities
- Defiance of authority
- Restlessness
- Frequent complaints of being bored
- Drop in school performance
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Poor self-esteem
- Intense self-criticism

**What should you do if you think your middle school student is depressed?**

- Be available to your young person as much as possible. Finding ways to be with him or her will send a message that you are available to talk when he or she is ready.





- Handle failure

Used with permission from *ON BASE*, Barb Friedmann

**Parents:**

Without your love and approval, children simply will not develop high levels of self-esteem. For children to feel good about themselves, you must feel good about them first. But feeling good about your children requires some *ACTION* on your part. Here are suggestions of activities you can do with your children to help strengthen their self-esteem.

- Identify and praise your child's strengths and good qualities.
- Prove to your children that they are worthy and deserving of love by loving them openly and unconditionally—when they succeed **AND** when they fail.
- Remind your children that regardless of the outcome, they do matter to you, to their teachers, friends, and most of all, to themselves. It isn't the result but the effort they put forth that shows their character and makes everyone feel proud.
- Encourage your children to participate in all aspects of life—school, religious worship, sports, clubs, hobbies, work, and friendships. These activities help children become more assertive and learn leadership and speaking skills as they share experiences with an ever-widening circle of friends.
- Teach self-reliance by refusing to pamper your children with handouts every time they demand something. Let them develop the resourcefulness to do the most with bare minimums. Do not do for your child what they can do for themselves. Teach them and let them do it. Saying "NO" to your child is OK.
- Children need lots of reassurance in this big and sometimes frightening world. Reassure your children that they have the skills to handle life's challenges if they have the willingness to face them and to do the best they can.
- Do not expect perfection from your children. If they encounter failure and defeat, reassure them that though it may not seem

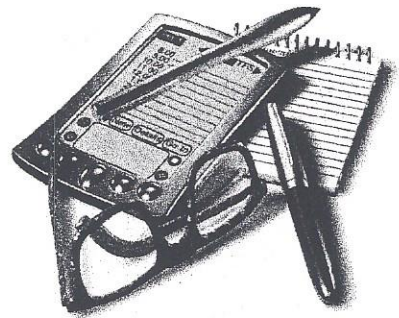
- Not every role model has to be a famous basketball player or movie actor. Some of the best role models are in your own neighborhood, schools, churches, and even your own home.

### **3. Aim Toward Your Goal**

- Put life, family, friends, and values in a good perspective.
- To design a successful career, start by first identifying the end goal, and then determine the steps necessary to obtain it.
- Find a caring adult who will be able to help you put your plan into place one step at a time.

### **4. Prioritize and Maximize**

- Now that you have a successful vision of yourself, you can begin prioritizing your daily routine so that you are able to make the best use of your time and your energy.
- Don't get caught up in things that may take you away from your goal, such as alcohol, drugs, or negative people.
- Anything that does not benefit your vision of success does not benefit you.
- Organize your work area and keep it free from distractions.
- Improve your organizational skills by using a daily planner, a personal "To Do" list, and a regular personal evaluation meeting with an adult or a mentor to check your progress.



### **5. Be a Winner**

- Build relationships in which you and the other person both succeed. These are called "win-win" partnerships.
- These "win-win" partners should be friends whom you can call on for support, tutoring, or for conversation that helps you stay on track.
- Teachers, coaches, principals, and mentors could be partners who help you succeed.

### **6. Communicate**



- Plan a special time to do homework. The TV should not be on at this time.
- Have a place at the table where written homework can be done.
- Go over the work with your teen when it is done.
- Ask your teen if he or she needs help with some work or subject. You may say something like, "I am pleased with your history quiz. Tell me about your spelling grades."
- If needed, try to get your teen to ask the teacher for help with the subject.

## **SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL**

Our school is committed to helping all children learn at high levels. As a parent or guardian, there are ways that you can seriously help your child in his or her job of school learning. Here are some of them:

- Meet your child's teachers, counselor, and principal as soon as possible each school year. These are important members of your child's "school family." Learn the best time and manner to reach them, for future use. Every middle school teacher has a planning period during the school day that can be used for parent conferences.
- Be involved in your child's school. Volunteer to help. Join and help the Home and School and/or the school council.

### **When problems arise:**

- Ask your child for his or her understanding of what's wrong. Then contact the school person involved, usually the teacher. If it cannot be resolved by telephone, ask to meet with the teacher or your child's team of teachers. If you need further help, talk with the counselor for that grade level, and finally the principal. Assume that someone at the school can help.

- Make appointments (i.e., doctor, dentist, etc.) during non-school hours if possible.
- Check in with the school periodically if you have any concerns about your child's attendance.
- Create a positive atmosphere in the morning routine so your child leaves for school in a good mood.

#### **FAMILY JOBS—**

##### **SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!**

- Think of three daily and three weekly jobs to be done. Your teen should pick and do one job from each list. Daily work may be emptying trash or dishwasher; feeding and watering animals; carrying clean clothes to bedrooms, and so on. Weekly work may be to dust or vacuum the house, to clean the bathroom, and so on.
- Plan together for what time and day the jobs should be done.
- Very often you may have to tell your teen, "The job must be done today!"
- Praise your teen for:
  - Doing the job on his or her own
  - Doing the job when you reminded him or her
  - Good attitude or working willingly on the job
  - Helping the family
  - Taking responsibility

#### **With school and home support and the student's responsibility to strive for success, your child will:**

- Join Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- Join Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.



- Solve conflicts peacefully—Young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.
- Have Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
- Have Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- Show a Sense of purpose—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
- Have a Positive view or personal future—Young person is optimistic about his or her personal future.

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