

Managing the Middle School Years

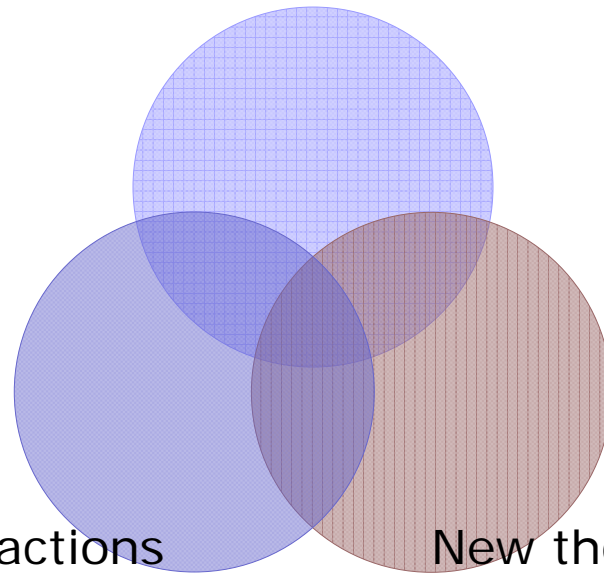
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What should you expect from your middle school child in the next one to three years?

New behaviors



New physical actions

New thought processes

Think about it...

- How did your child age while in grades 2 through 5?
- How did they look, act, behave over the course of those three years?

Guess What?

The middle school years are no exception!

Although it may seem as if your child is changing—for good or for bad remember, these changes are normal!

Ever feel like they're in their own world?

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"I bet if I was an I-pod you'd
listen to me!"

Social Issues

- Many children experience the most change in their social interactions with others.
 - This is most prevalent with:
their Parents!
 - They appear moody or self-absorbed.
- Students in MS have increased anxiety about their world and responsibilities.
- Circles of friends and fitting in with peers are major priorities for the MS student.

Girls & Boys in Middle School what are their concerns?

Girls

Fitting in

Having places to sit at lunch

Concerns about others talking behind their backs

AIM/MySpace—others writing negative comments

Being ostracized from their circle of friends

Boys

Fitting in

Having places to sit at lunch

Worries about how others will react to school success/failure

Peer pressure to handle conflict physically

Middle School Stress

The reasons for some of these behaviors are due to the increased stressors that are prevalent in middle school years.

These include:

1. Academic Stress
2. Peer Pressure
3. Family Stress

How is this stress expressed?

- Your child may begin to question the world around him.
- They may argue with you as they explore their new ideas
- They may be more frustrated with you and become quickly annoyed. However, they may be happy in the next minute!

This may look familiar...



"You have the right to remain sullen.
Anything you say can and will
be used against you."

Striving for Independence

- Students have **NO** control over Physical / hormonal changes
- They need to feel in control over their time, space, and feelings
- Students in Middle School now face making their own choices

Many control issues at home center around personal choices

- Time usually spent with the family becomes important time spent with peers. They are on the phone, texting, computer, "My Space," hanging out. They may not want to walk next to you at the Mall...
- Appearance becomes their decision! Things such as hairstyle, personal grooming, choice of dress – all are influenced by their peers approval. You are no longer dressing them!
- Curfews become debates... as does time management. And...let us not forget the car issues!

The Middle School provides multiple choices

- Your child may begin to challenge authority of adults (parents, teachers, aides, etc.).
- Explanations and ideas are grounds for exploration and questioning.
- Students want to be challenged and take on responsibility: they desire to take advanced classes, run for club officer; be in school government
- They become aware of the larger world and look to “do good.” They want to use paper (not Styrofoam) cafeteria containers, rescue dogs from hurricanes and grow their hair for cancer stricken kids.

How do things change from ES to MS?

- In Elementary School, children will come home and sit to have a snack and may offer information about their day.
- In Middle School, they may have something to eat (they may not). They may go straight to their bedroom with a 'fine' when asked about their day.

How do things change from ES to MS?

- In ES your child will want and may look for hugs and physical affection
- In MS, they may do everything they can to be physically separated from their parents.

Suggestions

- Although the physical attention may diminish, parents need to know that they need to be consistent and give their children attention. This allows them to know that you are there for them emotionally!
- This is sometimes effective when your child is alone—so they do not feel embarrassed.

Example:

- They may not want to be a part of family outings, vacations, events. They may much rather spend the time with friends.
- So, taking a friend with your child may be the catalyst to get your child with your family.

Our closing thoughts...

The main idea is to be supportive and consistent.

Don't try to be a friend to your child, be the parent.

Set clear rules, reinforce their behavior in a positive way and

BE CONSISTENT