

Time management

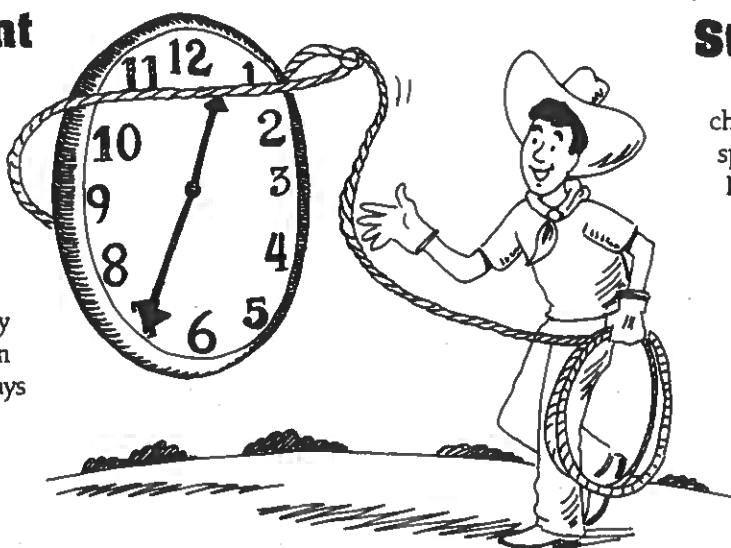
Everyone has the same amount of time—it's how we use it that makes the difference. Share these ideas to help your middle grader set priorities.

Make time for activities.

Middle schools usually offer more after-school activities than elementary schools do. If your child wants to run track or play chess, help him find ways to make time. Suggest that he get a head start on his homework if he has time between his last class and his activity. Also, have him add his activities to his planner. That way, he'll see which days he has more time to work on long-term projects or study.

Avoid distractions. When your child sits down to do homework, he should turn off his cell phone and stay off instant messenger, MySpace, or Facebook. Also, talk to him about polite ways to turn down invitations for times when he has work to do. For example, if friends want to go skating one afternoon, he might ask if they can go another day.

Don't procrastinate. Postponing work on an assignment will make your youngster feel pressed for time and not allow him to do his best work. Show him how to break a big job into smaller chunks, and teach him to stick to a schedule. He can write each task on a separate page of his planner. For example, if he has a book report, he could set aside a certain number of nights for reading the book, creating the draft, writing the final report, and polishing it.



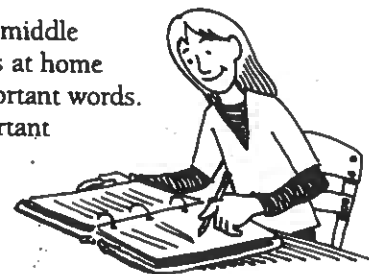
Study skills

In middle school, your child will find that she has to spend more time studying. Here are several tips that will help her.

Take good notes. Let your youngster know that taking good notes in class will make studying much easier. Explain that note taking doesn't mean copying down every word the teacher says. Instead, she should listen

carefully and write down the main points. If she didn't catch something, or if she's not sure she understood correctly, she should ask the teacher.

Write and highlight. Your middle grader can go over her notes at home and underline or circle important words. Suggest that she write important facts and formulas on index cards. Encourage her to answer end-of-chapter questions or to do practice math problems. She'll remember more and be better prepared for tests.

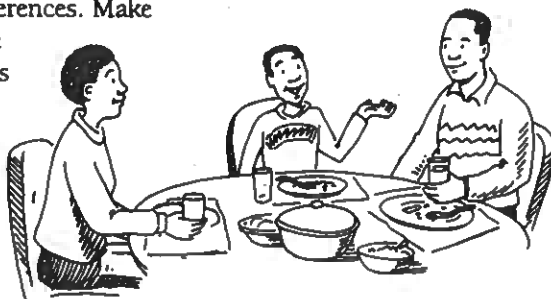


Find study buddies. Studying with friends can motivate your child. Recommend that she find other students in her class who might be easy to work with. They can share ideas, discuss tough concepts, and quiz each other in study sessions at each other's houses or at the library.

Stay involved!

Did you know that it's important to stay involved in your child's education as he gets older? Here are three ways to show him you care about school:

1. Know the teachers. Attend back-to-school nights, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Make sure you meet all of your middle schooler's teachers, as well as his guidance counselor. It will be easier to discuss problems if you've established communication from the start.
2. Talk about school. When your youngster gets home,



or at dinnertime, ask specific questions that invite discussion. *Examples:* "What did you do in science lab?" "What are you working on in math this week?" You'll hear what your child is doing and let him know that you're interested.

3. Track progress. Look over your youngster's graded tests and marked papers. If your school reports grades electronically, check them regularly. Also, watch for interim grade reports in the mail or in your child's backpack. If you monitor his progress, you'll be able to encourage him to get extra help—or to praise him for a job well done.

Middle Years

Tips for Living Successfully with Your Young Adolescent.

"The first tip is think ahead...One of our best tools as parents is being prepared. As your son or daughter gets to the middle school years, get ready for at least occasional conflicts. Think through what is truly important to you. Is the youngster's hairstyle as important as homework? Isn't curfew more of a concern than crabbiness? Obviously, dawdling is a lot easier to accept than drugs. As these give-and-take situations start, know ahead of time what areas you are willing to negotiate and what areas are absolutes.

Break down big chores into small parts. Sometimes young people feel overwhelmed by tasks, especially those they've let go for a long time. A disastrous bedroom, twenty-three overdue math assignments, a long-term project that's "suddenly" due in a few days (or hours!); all of these cause the preadolescent to choose to give up rather than get started.

Help your child by setting up smaller goals: clean off your bed; get five assignments done tonight; assemble the materials for the project. Preadolescents have trouble structuring tasks so that they are more approachable. In an even and off-hand way, we can help them in this.

Don't hesitate to remind your middle schooler about appointments and due dates. Try to think ahead about materials required for a project (unless you look forward to late-evening visits to Walmart). This will not last forever. When this same child was learning to walk, we held his or her hands and made the path smooth. Now he or she is learning to take on a tremendous assortment of life-tasks and changes; hand-holding (but not the firm, physical grip previously necessary) is needed for about a year or so as your middle schooler gets started on the road to being a responsible adult.

Be willing to listen; but don't poke or pry. Kids this age value independence and often seem secretive. Keeping to themselves is part of the separateness they are trying to create. Let them know you'd love to help them, but don't push them into a defensive position.

If your child is in the midst of a longtime friendship that is falling apart, the best thing you can do is stand by and be a good listener. It is devastating for us to see our children hurting, but taking sides or intervening is not appropriate, nor will it help. Preadolescents do survive these hurts, especially if they know we are there to listen to their pain.

All friendships have ups and downs. Children need to learn that being "best friends" isn't always smooth-sailing. People have differences of opinion and even get angry, but they still care for each other. This is what's going on when we get involved in those "I-hate-her-she-is-so-stuck-up-and-how-could-she-do-this-to-me" conversations. As parents we must help our kids see that one problem doesn't ruin a relationship, but stubbornness might. Middle schoolers have a lot of spats and falling outs, but often the friends are back together again in a short time.

If the issue is minor, keep things light. The shoes on the floor, the wet towel on the bed, the carton left open; these are maddening, perhaps, but not earth-shattering. Call attention to them in a humorous way, so your middle-schooler knows you want action but you aren't being punitive. "Either the cat's smarter than I thought or you left the milk carton open on the counter. One of you please put it back before it spoils."

The tips quoted are from *H.E.L.P. How to Enjoy Living with a Preadolescent* and *MORE H.E.L.P.* authored by Judith Baenen

6 Major Challenges Social Media Creates for Our Teenagers, and How to Parent Them

By Sherrie Campbell, PhD

Social media has taken over the lives of our teenagers. They spend more time interacting online than they probably spend interacting in person. It is an obsession and almost a responsibility in their lives they feel compelled to keep up with, which often pulls them away from the responsibilities in life that will promote them forward. As parents we need to help our teenagers' balance the challenges social media brings with the needs the real world requires of them.

1. Social Media: The majority of teenagers are obsessed with self-promotion and comparing themselves to their friends on social media in compulsive ways. Social media provides a constant outlet for the trap of comparison which subsequently creates feelings of depression and low self-worth in many teens. Teenagers rarely have a break from the constant stream of social media because their cell phones have practically become a part of their anatomy. To separate from their phone or computer is to separate from their entire world.

As parents we need to accept that social media is a normal part of our teenager's life, the world they live in and now necessary for their development. In light of this we have to parent more intently and deliberately on nurturing their self-esteem to be based in achievements, being a good person, working hard, having in-person conversations and reminding them of the value of real life.

2. Cyber Bullying: The cyber world provides a whole new outlet for bullying for teenagers. As parents we have seen over and over the publicized suicides on youtube, facebook, twitter etc. Bullying also takes on more subtle forms such as "sub-tweeting" which is a passive-aggressive, yet public, way to call out a friend or a person who isn't making you happy to everyone in your social media following. Sub-tweeting has replaced direct, person-to-person confrontation, and easily provokes sub-tweeting wars where others jump in and add on, but nothing gets resolved.

All of this has caused our teenagers to have a certain amount paranoia that people are tweeting about them, but because it's a subtweet there is really no way to find out if it is about them unless they ask. Often when they ask they are told it wasn't about them (when it was) and it becomes crazy-making.

As parents we can normalize that this type of stuff happened to us as teens, with notes being passed about us in class, but we need to validate for our teenagers how much more intense it is for them to have it happen so publically, and how hard that can be on their hearts. We have to parent them to choose courage over fear and to speak up for themselves person-to-person.

time to experience their own emotional space, unprovoked by social media, so they can grow in their confidence of being able to be alone and feel good about themselves.

6. Helicopter parent: Parents have almost unlimited and inappropriate access to the private lives of their teenagers due to social media. All parents have to do is follow their teenager and his/her friends on the different social media outlets and they know exactly where their kids are and if their kids are being honest or not based on the social media posts of their friends.

The GPS capability of smart phones has also turned many parents into part time private investigators and/or stalkers of their teenagers. Our teenagers have little privacy with all this technology and yet it is healthy for them to have some privacy to make their mistakes. Parents are trying to jump in front of normal developmental experiences their teenagers need to have, to evolve as people, before these mistakes even happen. In some ways this may interfere with their growth.

As parents we have to embrace the validity mistakes offer our teenagers and their personal growth. It is not in our their best interest to have their parents at home following them and their friends on social media to get an idea of where they are, what they are doing and if they are trustworthy. This type of parenting almost forces our teens to lie and rebel more strongly.

As a healthy parent, require reasonable check in times from your teenagers, enforce appropriate curfews and then let go. They need some room to live unwatched.

Clearly social media provides hurdles for parents and teenagers. It has its benefits but also has proven to have some horrible costs. The most important thing we raise in our children is their self-esteem.

Our teenagers need rules, discipline, balanced with freedom and independence, good values, in-person quality time and communication, love and validation.

