

Coping With Many Changes

The age of adolescence brings about a need to gripe. Following is a list of common gripes, the reason for each, and how you can cope.

Adolescent Gripe

"Why won't adults listen to me and try to understand what I mean?"

Reason for the Gripe

Your middle schooler is letting you know that he has opinions and that he wants to be heard. He wants a voice in decisions that affect him. He feels he's old enough to debate topics such as curfew and household chores. But he may not yet recognize that he still must also listen to others.

How You Can Cope

Welcome your son's request to listen to him.

When he has an opinion, ask him to tell you more. Engage him in conversation, but don't let him draw you into a debate.

Remember, he still needs to be told where the boundaries are. Explain that you expect the same courtesy from him—respectful listening. If he expresses dislike of his chores (perhaps in a loud or rude voice), remain calm. Tell him you will be ready to listen when he is ready to talk politely. Then try to give him some say about his chores. If he must put out the trash, perhaps he can decide when he will do it.



Adolescent Gripe

"Why won't you treat me like the grown-up that I am?"

Reason for the Gripe

Middle school is about establishing independence and one's own identity. Your child wants the privileges that come with adulthood, but she may not be ready to accept adult responsibilities, too. Her idea of what's "grown-up" may clash with yours.

How You Can Cope

Recognize your daughter's growing independence. As long as she is not pursuing life-threatening activities, give her the opportunity to try out her ideas. If her new haircut doesn't turn out to make her look just like the celebrity she was copying and it has to go through an awkward stage of growing back out, she will learn that her choices have consequences. If she wants to wear a tube top to school, remember, you are still the adult. It's up to you to set limits and it's okay to say no. When you can, allow her to do "grown-up" things. For example, let her try the espresso coffee, but tell her drugs and alcohol are definitely off limits.

