February 2017

Sahuarita Middle School
Mrs. Stephanie Silman, Principal

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

Short Stops

In touch with teachers

Your child's teachers are happy to hear from you when things are going well, not just when you have a concern. Consider emailing each one at least once this school year "just because." You could mention an assigned novel your tween enjoyed or a science experiment she found interesting.

E-cig use on the rise

Fewer middle graders are smoking regular cigarettes these days, but more are turning to electronic smoking devices called e-cigs. Make sure your tween knows it's against the law for minors to use them. Plus, using e-cigs could get him hooked on nicotine and start an unhealthy habit.

Look ahead to college

It's not too early to start talking to your tween about higher education. If you attended college, tell her about your favorite courses and extracurricular activities. Or connect her with a neighbor or cousin who's in college now. The student could explain what it's like to apply and choose a school—and maybe even give your youngster a campus tour.

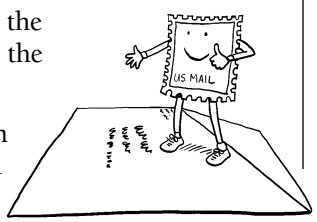
Worth quoting

"That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way." *Doris Lessing*

Just for fun

Q: What did the stamp say to the envelope?

A: Stick with me and we'll go places!



Handling tween behavior

Middle schoolers can be wonderful—but they can also keep parents on their toes with unpredictable behavior. Consider these ways to deal with typical issues you may face.

Cooperation

Tweens want to be more independent, and one way they try to prove it is by not cooperating with adults. When possible, give your child a sense of control by letting him decide how and when he does a task. You could say, "Would you rather shovel snow before you go sledding or when you get back?"

Attitude

If your youngster sometimes has an "attitude," try to speak calmly so you model how you want *him* to speak. And insist on respectful behavior—if he isn't speaking to you nicely, tell him you'll listen when he can be polite. Point out behaviors you want stopped (muttering under his breath, saying "whatever"), and explain why they are disrespectful.

Privacy

Middle graders often need time alone as they figure out who they are as individuals. The good news is, you can give your tween space without losing touch. For example, knock on his door and ask how he's doing, or invite him to run an errand with you. Also, be sure to have him join in on family outings, even if he protests at first.

Edible engineering

Encourage your tween to combine engineering with food as she learns basic design principles. Try these ideas.

Food on the move. Can your child make a pulley that will move a snack from one place to another? Have her choose a snack and gather paper towel tubes, string, straws, empty ribbon spools, and pieces of cardboard. Let her design her pulley, test it, redesign it to fix any problems, and test it again until she has one that "delivers" her snacks.

Spaghetti "magic." How tall can your middle grader make a spaghetti tower that will support a large marshmallow? She could build it with uncooked spaghetti and marshmallows and then balance a marshmallow on top. Using what she learned from her first attempt, she can try again and aim higher.

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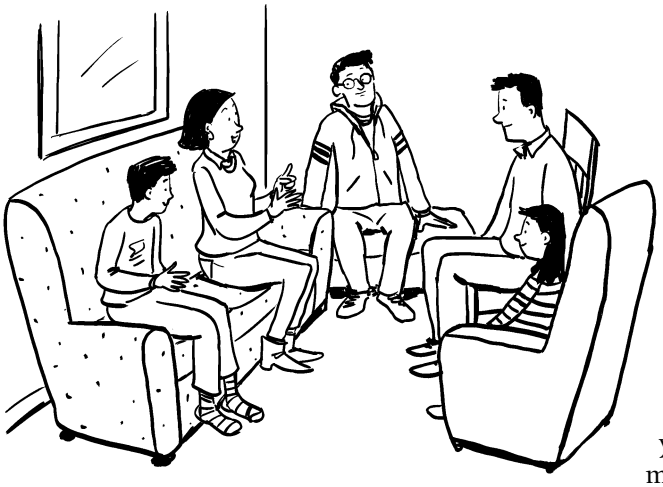
Good point!

Making a logical argument is something your child will need to do well in school—and later, on the job. Why not help her practice at home with a fun family debate? Here's how.



1. Choose your topic. First, pick a question that will encourage a friendly debate. *Example:* "What makes a better pet, a cat or a dog?" Then, let one person be a judge, and have everyone else pick a side.

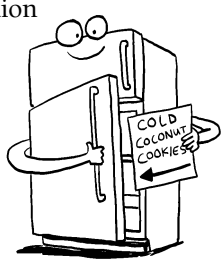
2. Prepare your case. The people on each side write down at least three reasons why others should agree with them, including facts to support opinions. For instance, if you write "Cats are more low maintenance," a supporting fact might be "They don't need to be walked." Or if your argument is "Dogs are more fun," a fact could be "Dogs learn tricks more easily."

3. Defend your side. Take turns stating your arguments and backing them up. It's up to the judge to decide who made a stronger case! Let a person from the winning side become the next judge, and debate again.

Remember this (and that)

Does your middle grader complain that he studied hard for a test and then forgot some answers when he took it? Suggest strategies like these to strengthen his recall.

A house full of facts



"Placing" information in rooms of a house provides a visual guide. As your tween "walks through" the house in his mind, the rooms will help trigger his memory. To recall figures of speech, he might picture opening a kitchen refrigerator and finding *cold coconut cookies*—that's alliteration. In the living room, he could imagine a couch *as soft as a cloud*—a simile.

Silly stories

Suggest that your child make up a sentence or story linking facts he needs to remember. Say he is studying the Minoans, an ancient civilization. He might think: "A Minoan found a bar of bronze on an island made of concrete." That would help him recall that the Minoans lived in the Bronze Age on an island named Crete.

Q&A

No more "I can't"

Q *Sometimes before my son even tries something, he'll say, "I can't do it!" I'd like to help him be more confident, but how?*

A Your child might get rid of his "I can'ts" by putting them on paper. He could write, "I can't do this math formula" or "I'm not good at basketball." Then, have him tear the paper into pieces and throw them away. He may find that this action gives him a fresh start.

Also, encourage him to add the word "yet" when he says he can't do something. *Examples:* "I can't do that math formula *yet*" or "I'm not good at three-point shots *yet*." That will remind him that it's a matter of time and effort until he *can*. For instance, he may get the wrong answer the first time he uses a new math formula. But with practice and hard work, he'll begin applying the formula correctly.

Parent to Parent

A library helper

Ever since my daughter Riley was little, she has always loved going to the library. We make it a point to go every Saturday morning to check out books and return the ones we've read.

Recently, I found out that our local branch was short on volunteers and was looking for people of all ages. When I mentioned this to Riley, she asked if we could help. I called the library, and they said they would be thrilled to have us and would train Riley and me together.

Now we volunteer a couple of hours a month. Riley is enjoying the experience. I'm glad to see her providing a community service—plus, she's always bringing home new books to read!

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfecustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

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