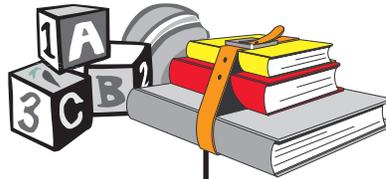


The Corporate Council *on Out of School Time*

## Facts & Tips for Parents:



**Child Care Inc.**  
275 Seventh Avenue  
New York, NY 10001-6708



**Facts & Tips for Parents:**  
**Managing the**  
**Middle School Years:**  
**A Time of Transitions**

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## The Corporate Council *on Out of School Time*

The Corporate Council On Out-Of-School Time includes representatives from a variety of New York City employers who have come together to review and address specific issues on school-age child care services of concern not only to their employees, but also to schools and other organizations in the New York City communities where they do business.

Through corporate initiatives, the Council seeks to increase public awareness about the needs of school-age children, and to improve both the availability and quality of school-age programs.

The Corporate Council is coordinated and staffed by Child Care, Inc., a non-profit child care resource and referral agency. For more information on the Corporate Council, contact:

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# Introduction

The middle school years (ages 11 to 14) are an important time for young people and parents. They mark a time of great change for your child and, as a result, for you. These transitions provide the potential for tremendous, positive growth, but they also provide challenges for your children and you. Most children complete the transitions effectively, but a good number struggle with these changes, and some respond with behaviors that are of great risk to their success, health, and safety.

This time period has been the focus of much recent study. The attention of scientists, educators, and clinicians has given us solid information on how parents can help their children through this transition period. This information comes from scientific analyses of the impacts different parenting practices have on kids' achievement, adjustment, health, and mental health. Thus, despite the fact that our actions as parents emerge from an artful combination of our own experiences, ideas from family and friends and spontaneous decisions, there is a science of parenting that can be applied to refine, revise, or revamp our practices.

This book is designed to pass on the knowledge discovered in the last few years, so you have a resource to use—in combination with the experiences that you bring—to raising a child between the ages of 11 to 14. We hope that we have effectively distilled the information contained in the scientific literature so that you may put the knowledge into practice. Our intention is to be informative and inspirational, so that all members of your family come through this transition in good shape, good health and good spirits.





## What Science Tells Us

Over the last few decades, we have learned several important facts. First, we know that parents have different styles. Although this may seem obvious (you just have to watch yourself and other people to know that), it is important for understanding the nature of the home environment in which children grow up. Currently, parents can be broken into groups based on four sets of behavior:

- their involvement with their children
- their level of support of children
- their level of control and discipline
- the level of conflict that children experience in interactions with their parents.

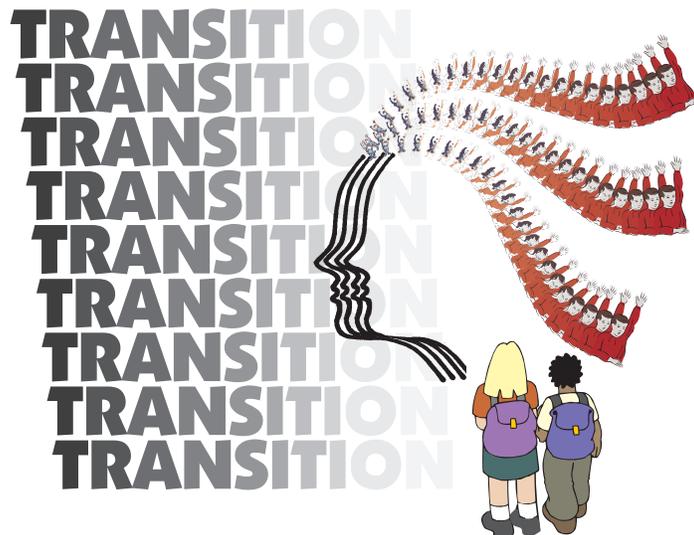
The second fact that is emerging is that children's adjustment and functional levels are highly influenced by the mix of the behaviors that parents demonstrate. For example, we know that children with involved parents are much more effective as teenagers than children with uninvolved parents. Finally, we know that parents can change their practices in important practical ways once they know what approaches seem to have the best outcomes. Therefore, science tells us that child-rearing does not have to be mysterious or guided only by gut feelings. We can use judgment, information, and practical steps to raise our children well and meet the challenges of the middle school years.

Turning to children between 11 to 14, science also tells us that kids in this age group are going through massive transitions. Their bodies, minds, social worlds and family lives are changing rapidly and, to them, often unpredictably. As a result, most children experience some form of stress and distress after the long period of stability and comfort found in middle childhood. Scientifically gathered information indicates that most youth experience a decrease in their self-esteem during these years, while also gaining tremendous amounts of information about tempting and, sometimes, dangerous aspects of the world outside the family.



Science also suggests that the social institutions established to help young adolescents grow may not be designed to meet their real needs. Educational settings that expect children to make the transition from a single or a few teachers, who know students personally, to a number of teachers that know each student partially, if at all, are settings that may be harmful to this age group. In fact, this may be a time when youth need more adult guidance and close contact, rather than less. Additionally, families that respond to the apparent maturity of older children and young adolescents by providing less supervision and high levels of freedom may be placing children into situations where their judgment and self-control is overwhelmed. Lastly, the media and market place, which targets pre-teens and teens as consumers, usually appeals to them as if they were young adults, presenting them with inappropriate models of clothing, social interaction, and behavior.

All of this information suggests that parents need to consciously and actively consider their practices. It is not enough simply to love children. Some of the most effective practices may not naturally emerge from common sense. We cannot just sit back and let them grow. As children make important transitions, they need thoughtful guidance and active participation by parents.





## The Artful Application of Science

The new information regarding middle school children has important implications for parents. We have formulated guidelines that we believe will help you raise your children well. However, the guidelines can not be applied mechanically and they will not tell you how to respond to all the day-to-day situations you will face. To achieve the best outcomes, it is essential that the guidelines be applied thoughtfully, tailored to the specific situation and child.

Thinking about parenting as an art gives rise to several recommendations. First, raising children is a creative process. A set of guidelines, no matter how detailed, cannot tell you exactly how to respond to all of the situations you will face. Therefore, you will have to be flexible and creative, using the guidelines to help you formulate a general idea, but using your wisdom and experience to determine the exact response. Next, great art requires trial and error. So does great parenting. You will not produce a masterpiece with each conversation or each interaction. In fact, sometimes you will make big mistakes. But the body of your work can result in beautiful, rewarding outcomes.

We encourage you to keep perspective on your efforts. Don't believe that all of your responses are beyond question, but also don't fret over mistakes, as long as you are working in the right direction. Artful application also suggests that you need to blend the tools and guidelines described here. We recommend that you consistently try to provide your best response to each situation, but that your efforts involve appropriate timing, as in good dance and music. Over time, it is best to have a balance of the different elements that we discuss. For example, it is important to have a warm, involved relationship with your child, but sometimes—if your child has been defiant and knowingly broken rules of safety and health—you may have to be very strict and somewhat cold in applying some punishment. You will seem uncaring and harsh at these times. Artful application will help you recognize that you will be able to come back to more warm interactions at another time. Keeping this perspective will help you realize that your overall “symphony” is what is important, not each and every individual note. Finally, recognizing parenting as art may help you realize that raising kids is an emotional enterprise that requires thoughtful harnessing of emotions in order to get the best result. Although spontaneity is an essential quality of art and parenting, most enduring art is not simply letting emotions explode onto a canvas, stage or musical score. You will be moved by your interactions, you will be enraged and discouraged, you will also be worried and proud. These emotions should inform your interactions, but not control them. So, be creative, establish a balance, present an excellent body of work; but don't sweat the mistakes, and maintain a handle on your emotions, so your efforts reflect your ideals and hopes.



# 3

## Effective Parenting: The Basic Foundation

A review of information on child adjustment suggests that there are four aspects to successful parenting. Success during the middle school years is defined as having children with some important characteristics: The kids are invested in school, they get along well with family members (although there is more family conflict after a child enters the pre-teen and teen years), their emotional lives are fairly stable or difficulties are being managed, they care for their bodies and their minds, they have fulfilling social contacts, and they avoid unhealthy and destructive behaviors and habits. We see the four aspects of successful parenting as reflected in a set of key actions that parents take. To help remember them, we have chosen to call them the “A, B, C, D’s of Effective Parenting.”

**A** It is essential to have a positive relationship that contains a high level of **Affection** and **Attachment**. Taking the steps to be close to your child, even when your child is pulling away, is not only rewarding, but fosters communication about tough topics and keeps your child from making big mistakes. Staying attached to your child by providing support, being open to discussing mistakes, and using discipline that does not alienate your child helps both of you weather storms that may develop.

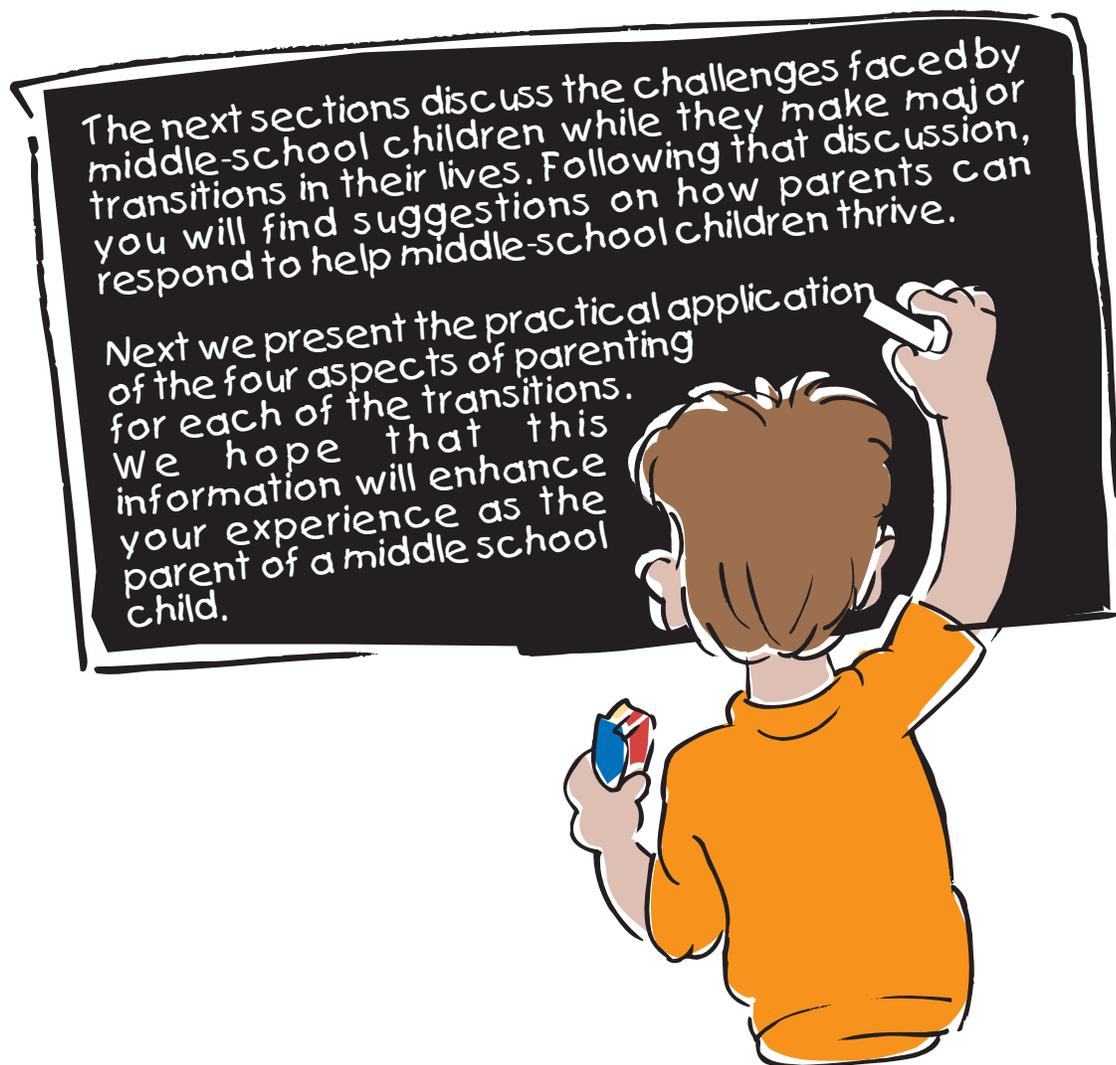
**B** A strong, affectionate relationship is not enough, however, especially during the pre-teen and teen years. Parents need to have **Balance** in their interactions so they can provide effective guidance and discipline. Middle school students benefit from parents who help them determine the way they should act and help them contain the newfound energy that comes with puberty. Parents who provide balance help their kids keep an appropriate focus on education and keep them away from unhealthy actions. Parents who are simply friends to their children have many positive contacts, but have very little influence when kids are making tough decisions about temptations and unhealthy actions.

**C** Each stage of life has its **Challenges**. Parents meet with greater success when they understand the challenges that are faced by kids. You can make decisions more comfortably when you know what developmental tasks your child has to complete. In particular, when parents understand the challenges faced by middle-school aged children, they are able to understand sources of potential



stress and distress. The middle-school years are full of major transitions that alter a child's relationships with peers, with family, and with himself or herself. A parent that understands the impact of these transitions is able to provide more effective guidance and support.

**D** Finally, the most effective parents help their children **Develop skills** to meet the challenges of new stages of life. Parents of infants help them learn to sit up, crawl, and walk. Parents of toddlers help them play with other children and learn manners. When children start school, parents help them interact with other adults and manage peer scuffles. In a positive relationship that is balanced by guidance and discipline, parents provide advantages to their children by helping them **Develop skills**. For middle-school kids the skills necessary include managing emerging physical maturation, managing increased sexual drives, working with increased tension in peer relations, organizing school behavior to manage multiple subjects and multiple teachers and building resistance to tempting but unhealthy behaviors.



# 4 Understanding the Middle Years

## a. Physical Transitions



During the middle school years, children are beginning to make the transition from their child shapes and sizes to their adult shapes and sizes. Changes occur externally and internally in all bodily systems. Internally, the most important changes occur in the reproductive system and the nervous system. Externally, the most significant changes occur in the secondary sexual characteristics. This is especially true for girls, but all kids also face changes in their height, weight, and facial appearance.

The typical course of maturation for boys and girls highlights the changes to which kids have to adapt. The ages we use in this section describe the typical pattern. Some children begin each of these stages up to one year before or one year after typical children.

For girls, an extended spurt in height occurs between the ages of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  and  $14\frac{1}{2}$ , with the most rapid growth occurring between  $9\frac{1}{2}$  and 12. After twelve most girls continue to grow, but at a much slower rate. Girls develop breast buds beginning around  $10\frac{1}{2}$  years, which is the first externally visible change, although some girls may be aware that they have pubic hair growth before breast development occurs. Breast development continues for about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years. Girls reach menarche, the first menstrual period, at the age of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  on average in the United States, or two years after breast bud development.

Boys experience a pattern that starts at a later age and lasts longer. The first change is testicular growth, which starts at  $11\frac{1}{2}$  and continues for approximately  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years. The growth spurt in height starts soon after the testes begin to change and reaches the most rapid rate at  $13\frac{1}{2}$ , but rapid growth continues through age  $16\frac{1}{2}$ . Change in the size and shape of the penis occurs between  $12\frac{1}{2}$  and  $16\frac{1}{2}$ . Growth of pubic hair is noted well after maturation of the testes and penis have begun. Production of sperm has not been clearly described because boys do not discuss this as openly as girls discuss menarche and the event is often kept secret. However, surveys suggest that most boys have mature ejaculations by age 14.

Psychologically, pre-teens and teens report that they are conscious of the changes in their bodies, that they think a fair amount about the changes, and that they have mixed feelings about the changes. Less than 10% of teens surveyed indicate that they have only negative feelings about the changes encountered, while less than 10% report exclusively positive feelings. Most kids view the changes as inevitable, but they have both positive and negative reactions to the changes as they occur. In the midst of the transition, youth report that they are slightly confused as they try to determine the impact that changes have on their social lives, their family relationships, and their view of themselves.

As the changes are occurring, youth find their thoughts focused on their appearance and the impact of their appearance on others. Many teens, especially girls, report a heightened self-consciousness that is rarely comfortable. Youth often believe that others are very aware of the changes and that others are watching them just as closely as they are watching themselves.

## Special Challenges

The physical transitions that start during the middle-school years contribute to some special challenges for some children. First, when developing boys and girls have limited information about the changes, they are sometimes frightened or confused about them. Girls who have their first period without an explanation experience distress and great confusion. Some girls report that they worried that they had a serious injury or that they had done something terribly wrong. Boys who are unsure of the changes occurring in their bodies sometimes feels guilty when they experience their first ejaculation, especially if it occurs in their sleep. Fortunately, most children today are provided with information through health education classes, but not all of their questions are answered in that format. On the one hand, with information, girls report that they are less scared when they have their first period. They also report that they feel more comfortable raising questions and concerns after they have received information about this natural development. In contrast, boys report that few people talk to them about sexual arousal and ejaculation. Despite common assumptions, boys



generally do not talk to friends about these experiences, so they often struggle to figure out their meaning on their own.

A second set of challenges is just beginning to be understood: the timing of maturation. Pre-teens that mature early face important challenges to their psychological adjustment, while late maturing teens face another set of challenges. Early maturing girls describe discomfort with the weight gain that is usually associated with development. They indicate that peers and family members criticize any weight gain, which makes them feel uncomfortable with their new shape. Significantly, negative feelings about one's body leads to depression and dislike of one self, lasting several years for some girls. Despite the devaluation of a mature body by peers and family members, early maturing girls indicate they receive positive comments and greater attention from older males because of their mature physique. This attention is experienced with great discomfort by most girls so that even this "positive response" contributes to their distress.

Early maturing boys face a challenge of increased expectations. They are treated as able to manage more responsibilities and they are expected to be free from "immature" emotions. Early maturing boys do seem to gain some status, however, as their peers tend to look up to them.

On the other end, late maturing teens are sometimes treated as "little kids" by peers and are often the object of teasing and threats. Both boys and girls report negative views of themselves if they are not happy with the level of development that they have reached. Thus, falling outside of the normal range in development presents additional challenges.

How a pre-teen or teen views his or her body can be a source of challenge. When a child views her body negatively, the child is prone to unhappiness, discouragement, and isolation from peers. Factors that contribute to dissatisfaction include a negative view of one's size or weight, cultural images about ideal body types, and athletic prowess.

Finally, all teens face the challenge of managing increased sexual arousal. The level and frequency of arousal is variable from one person to another, but is experienced by most kids as something that affects their bodies and their minds. Pre-teens and teens encounter a variety of messages about sexual arousal. On the one hand, popular culture generally encourages expression of sexual arousal through dating and sexual encounters, and more and more children are exposed to those messages at younger and younger ages. In addition, educational efforts provide effective information on the purpose of sexual arousal through sex education classes. A child's peer group may have variable ideas about what to do regarding sexual arousal, with some groups endorsing sexual activity and others discouraging it. In contrast, pre-

teens and teens report that the majority of their parents do not discuss ways of handling sexual arousal. As a result, youngsters are often left to their own devices to determine the correct actions to take. Significantly, however, surveys of children in the 11 to 14-year age group indicate that these kids would like to have discussions about this topic with parents. In general, although they are uncomfortable with discussions and unwilling to bring up the topic themselves, most youngsters want some advice on when, where, how, and with whom they should express their sexual feelings.

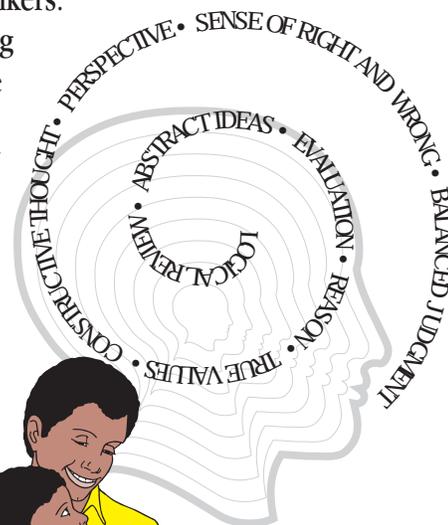
## b. Transitions in Thinking

A number of factors contribute to changes in thinking during the 11 to 14-year period. First, a child's brain is becoming more effective during this period. The process of reviewing information and drawing conclusions becomes faster. Additionally, a person's memory capacity changes so that adolescents have an expanded capacity to work with more information while solving problems. Finally, youngsters in this age group are able to generate and evaluate multiple ideas at the same time. Physical changes in the brain may support these changes in thinking. During adolescence, the number of connections between nerve cells in the brain actually decrease, so that communication among nerve cells becomes more rapid. In effect, brain activity moves onto highways, as compared to local streets, for faster thought and action. With these changes, 11 to 14-year olds become more capable of logical review and thinking about abstract ideas and knowledge. They are increasingly able to draw conclusions and are able to evaluate the logic in other people's ideas and statements.

As pre-teens and young teens develop this capacity to draw conclusions and evaluate ideas, they become more critical thinkers.

They exercise their critical review by considering the rules that they are asked to live by and the values that they have been asked to hold. This puts them in a position to challenge much of what they have been taught and to question positions taken by others. In turn, this often leads them to argue about their family's practices, beliefs, and rules.

For some pre-teens this emerging capacity to understand and question leads them to search for a different, more "true" set of values. But, in a funny way, their questioning minds do not allow them to have much con-



confidence in any idea, so they vacillate and change their conclusions and their actions often. In fact, in some experiments, pre-teens are unable to draw conclusions that are obvious to 9 year olds because the pre-teens doubt that anyone can make definitive decisions no matter what evidence they have. Parents sometimes bear the brunt of changes in thinking as their children challenge long-held beliefs and wonder about the wisdom of their parents' decisions.

### c. Social Transitions

The major transition that occurs during the middle-school years is a shift from concern for family relations and family contact to a major emphasis on peer relations and peer contact. Pre-teens and early teens turn to their peer group more and more as “the” source for information and understanding of the world. Parents often suddenly become “stupid” and completely unaware of how the world operates. Youngsters, although usually still following their parents' guidelines and values, rarely acknowledge that parents know what they are doing or what they are talking about. Instead, the peer group, a kind of large, powerful, amorphous “them,” becomes all knowing, all powerful, and all aware. Kids want to make sure that they know what others are thinking, want to make sure that they fit in and follow all of the peer rules, and want to spend most of their free time in contact with peers. Failing peer contact, kids have a greater interest in being alone than before. Even children with close relationships with their parents and siblings express a desire to be by themselves for increasingly longer periods of time. This presents a challenge to families that wish to spend leisure time together at the same time that teens are less interested in this contact and are often resentful when forced to participate in family events and say that they will not go on family vacations or complain that they are “bored.”

Some of the time alone may be desired to explore sexual arousal, as body exploration and masturbation occurs. Time alone may actually be essential for development. As thinking changes and youngsters begin to critically review what they have been taught, they need time to ponder their world and their thoughts. Their grasp of this critical thinking is fragile. It cannot withstand the logical scrutiny of adults, so kids protect their musings while they consolidate their skills. After a long period of dependence and frequent contact, they may need some long episodes of solitary time to make a metamorphosis. The time alone may foster growth in thinking, growth in the emotional capacity to manage tough situations and growth in the capacity to understand their own changes.

As youngsters shift their focus to their peer group for guidance and support, they are entering a rough world, especially if they attend a regional middle school in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Studies of peer relations in middle-school indicate that relations can be as harsh and difficult as portrayed in teen books and movies. For students that move from elementary schools to regional middle schools, teasing and bullying by peers

increases dramatically in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and remains at a high level through the middle of 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The frequency of bullying and teasing is more intense among boys than among girls, but it is still negative and fairly frequent among girls. This teasing and bullying functions to establish the social hierarchy in the peer group. In effect, peers are socially constructing their cliques and use teasing to determine who is included and who is excluded from the social contacts of a particular clique. Once the hierarchy is stable, by 8<sup>th</sup> grade in schools that have been studied, teasing decreases dramatically. While the teasing is occurring, most teens are feeling unstable, so much of the teasing and bullying is done defensively. Even well-intentioned middle school kids may go along for fear that they will become the object of ridicule and rejection if they say something or stand up for someone else. Therefore, many young teens may be the object of teasing, the perpetrator or a non-assertive bystander in a complicated mix of actions that are often outside of adult awareness.

Youngsters often emerge from encounters with their peer group emotionally battered and irritable. Because it has such an impact on them, pre-teens and early teens devote an extensive amount of attention and thought to the world of their peers. Schoolwork, family relations and responsibilities sometimes take a far back seat to concerns about how one is being accepted by peers. Family relationships are often impacted as kids sometimes come home battered, discouraged, or irritable. During this stage of development, overt peer pressure has great power. Many youngsters will go along with a variety of acts for fear that the “group” will reject them if they do not. The power of peer pressure is one of the reasons that the actions of middle-school kids are often more influenced by who kids hang out with than by family values and prior upbringing. The power of peer pressure is also the reason why parents have to help their children, by clearly spelling out expectations in a very firm way. This helps kids resist pressure to engage in unhealthy or destructive acts.

Of course, peer relations also provide a source of energy and pleasant contact. Despite the difficulties involved, pre-teens and teens derive more enjoyment from peer contact than from family contact. As a result, it is sought out at the expense of “family time.” Another positive aspect of peer relations is worth noting. As middle-school kids seek to determine their own mind and values while pulling away from parents, they still benefit from



having a sounding board to review their ideas, their peer relations, and their reactions. This is often found in a single, very close friend of the same sex. This person may become the new authority who is talked about constantly, thought about often and contacted very frequently. It can appear that this person is the only person of concern to a pre-teen or young teen, which may seem unhealthy to parents, but may actually serve a very useful, supportive purpose. Youth that have a “best friend” during this time period are generally happier and are less tense than children that do not have this relationship.

In contrast, a serious, exclusive dating relationship during this time period may seem desirable, but could be harmful. Surveys indicate that young teens that have had exclusive dating relationships are more prone to depression than teens who have dated in groups or who have not had dating experience. Some experts believe that persons younger than 14 should avoid exclusive relationships because those relationships detract from social development and academics. Instead, dating in large groups where there is a mix of people is encouraged.

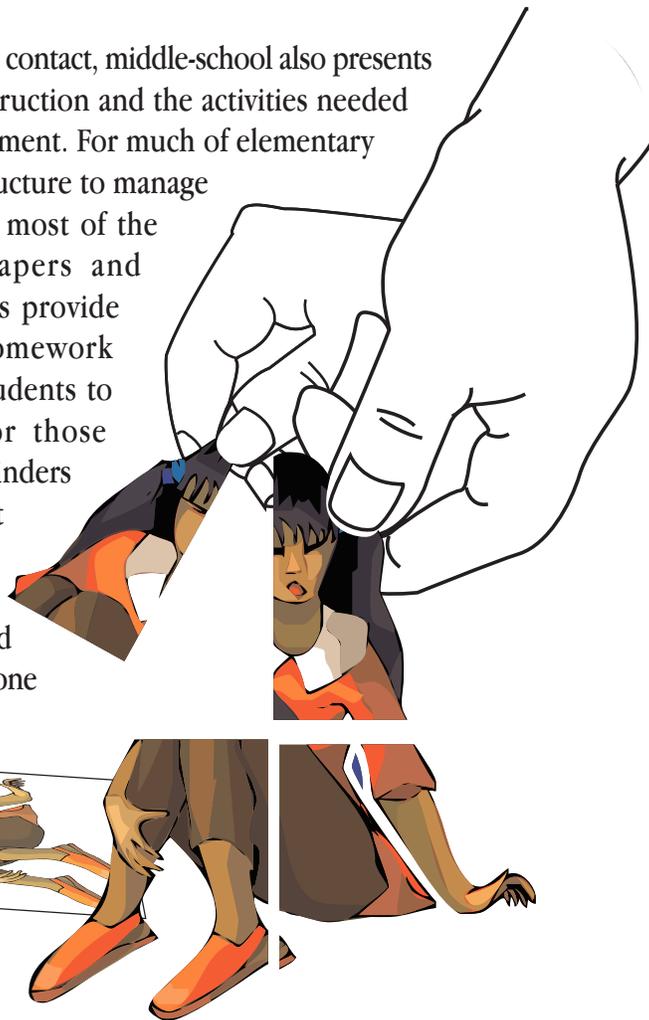
#### **d. School Transitions**

Most pre-teens in the United States and the New York region change school buildings and school environments when they enter the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In general, they go from an elementary school that is usually close to home to a regional middle school that receives students from a number of elementary schools. This transition requires adjustment to significant changes in peer groups, friendship relationships, and organization of the school day. In most schools, there is no longer a main teacher who presents most instruction and keeps track of the progress and adjustment of a relatively small number of students. No longer is there a single person that sets the schedule for instruction and modifies the school day to meet the needs of the class. Instead, there are a number of teachers, one for each subject, who instruct students in 45- to 50-minute periods. Each teacher has a large number of students, often 100 to 150, that they have contact with each day. The clock rules the schedule, and students must rush from one class to another or chance being late. The structure hardly allows the time or opportunity for teachers and students to truly get to know one another, even if they are inclined to do so. Support and understanding of a particular student’s situation is not easily provided or gained, even when the student reaches out. This is a very different circumstance from what most children faced in elementary school. For success in middle school, a student has to be pretty stable on any particular day and generally stable over the course of days. Any disruption to emotional stability must be managed by the student, with only a chance that a supportive contact with an adult will occur. Middle-school educators understand this situation and constantly work to make their settings as supportive, comfortable, and manageable for students, especially 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, but the structure presents

them with challenges as well. Considering the extensive changes and challenges faced by pre-teens, some experts have wondered why schools are organized to limit contact with adults at the exact time when more connections may be more effective.

In this setting, it is no wonder that the peer group takes on more importance, since connections within the peer group are more readily available than connections with a teacher or other adult. Peers are able to keep better track of a friend's activities and reactions to events than any teacher, counselor or administrator could ever do in this structure. For many situations, a distressed 6<sup>th</sup> grader may find himself turning to peers for support and advice. This can be very useful and peer support should be encouraged, but in some cases the blind may be leading the blind. There have been several times in middle-school settings when it has been discovered that pre-teens or teens were struggling with serious situations including suicidal ideation, family abuse, violent threats and extensive sexual activity with only the guidance of their friends, while no adult has been informed. The structure simply does not encourage watchful monitoring of students and does not allow students to easily report stress because reports only happen when youngsters have experienced comfortable contact in informal meetings over an extended period of time.

In addition to a change in teacher contact, middle-school also presents students with transitions in instruction and the activities needed to manage learning and achievement. For much of elementary school, teachers provide the structure to manage learning. The teacher handles most of the materials and doles out papers and assignments in doses. Teachers provide reminders to write down homework assignments and encourage students to put away papers needed for those assignments. Very frequent reminders are given on due dates and test dates, so students do not need to use their memories to recall this information. Books and notebooks are ordinarily kept in one location and a student has a store



of pencils and pens close by. In contrast, most middle-schoolers are required to manage their own materials, keep track of their assignments, and plan their own schedules in order to meet academic demands.

Consider the simple problem of arriving in class without a pencil or pen. Because they are “big” kids now, teachers will not usually have a supply in the class for forgetful kids. So, if a student arrives without a pen or pencil, he is often not allowed to go to his locker to search for one. He might be able to borrow one from a classmate, but failing that, the student cannot take notes or fully participate in an assignment to be done at the desk. Similar problems can be encountered in writing down homework assignments.

Many students have trouble making the transition to greater self-management and do not develop the organized behaviors required to keep track of needed materials, to keep track of assignments and to schedule time for more homework, more tests and more long-term assignments than previously encountered. As a result, many students begin to fall off track academically. With less teacher involvement, these students are not discovered to be having problems until well into the school year, after they have experienced demoralization that can hamper their recovery even when given extra help. The close contact of an elementary school teacher may have kept many children with low organizational skills performing well, but those same kids flounder in the middle school structure and become less invested in their education. For these kids, school may have been difficult before but they managed it because of the support of a familiar, warm teacher. In contrast, under the relatively cold circumstances of a middle-school setting, success can be hard to attain and school can become a chore with no joy.

Thus, the transitions encountered as soon as a child enters middle school can be daunting. Middle school administrators and teachers are making great efforts to support middle-school students by creating team teaching and programs of informal, supportive contacts between adults and students. However, major changes in structure are unlikely to occur in the near future. Therefore, a parents’ role should be more active in supporting a child than it was in late elementary school. We urge that your knowledge of the changes in school setting motivates you to make a very strong effort to maintain a close connection and frequent contact with your child.

