

Emotional Development for Middle School Age

Emotions can peak and valley in a matter of moments for teens, which makes this is a difficult and challenging topic for parents, students, and educators. Students are entering a stage of abstractness where they are more self-conscious about themselves and how they relate to the others. They start to question parental authority on many levels. Being independent in all areas of their lives is extremely important to teens, no matter how much stress it causes.

Your calm and steady response to your child's emotional responses will offer security and trust during difficult times. One way students may test parental boundaries is through their choice of friends. It is not only their choice of friends, but also the amount of time they spend with friends rather than family. A good suggestion is to make sure friends are welcomed in your home at all times. This will provide you with the ability to observe these friendships and address appropriately any issue that may arise in the relationship. With today's changes in technology, be aware of the friend that commands your child's time on the phone texting, talking, or on the computer with Facebook and other connections. Healthy time limits will offer your child boundaries which make them feel safe. Too much independence too soon may cause teens to feel unsure, about their involvement with social media.

Be advised that emotional outbursts are very common during this period of development. The key to managing these outbursts are your reactions. Developmentally, your child may overreact to the many stressful situations that arise during middle school; however how you respond is extremely important. Be careful! You may either feed into your student's emotional issues by adding fuel to the fire or you can help put out fires by slowly and unemotionally talking through the issues that arise. You are the adult; you need to provide the stability for your adolescent. Make sure you have all the facts in emotionally charged situations. Remember, developmentally, your child is only looking at the situation from one side. You have to help provide the big picture view.

This is an excellent time to listen. Just listen quietly, maybe ask a few clarifying questions and let your child share his or her feelings. If you don't listen or give your child the non-verbal cues that you really don't care, they will hesitate in sharing with you again. You don't even have to provide an answer, solution, or give advice, just listen attentively. This approach will build the relationship between you and your child. You can offer your child a great sense of security by simply remaining calm when their emotions are volatile. Teenage feelings are real. Listen to accounts empathetically, knowing confidently that your child trust you to care.