

Students in Action - Lesson Plan

Getting Along with Parents – Lesson Plan

Introduction:

Have you ever thought of your middle school experience as being on a wild roller coaster ride? Do you face many ups and downs each day? Understand that as confusing as middle school is for you, it is also can be a confusing time for your parents also! As middle school students start to become more independent, parents may experience difficulty understanding that their support is needed as much as ever just not in the same way as before. As adolescents begin to take charge of their lives, relationships with parents change often painfully. Even though parents are expected to understand their kids, it is important for kids to understand their parents' concerns and motivations and to keep open the lines of communication. Realize that the freedom you desire is best earned by proving to your parents that you are responsible and trustworthy.

Discussion –The entrance to middle school is perhaps one of the toughest transitions children make in all of their years of education. There are a number of changes with new responsibility demands not only for the student but for the parent also. Adolescents are starting to pull away, push against, and get around authority in order to create more freedom to grow and live on more independent terms. Arguments, complaints, delays, disobedience, and testing limits become part of an adolescent's repertoire at home and school. With all the new changes and stresses in the adolescent's life during middle school, it is important to understand that he/she needs help even though it wasn't asked for. While middle school is a minefield of challenges for students, this is a time when significant parental supervision and support must be given. Even though you resist it, students need guidance and boundaries so they can continually try more and more independence. One needs more support and structure. The steps to having a great relationship with your parents include 3 steps. **Respect each other.** Without mutual respect, any relationship will be an unhappy one. People who respect each other: a) value each other's opinions, b) listen to each other, and c) disagree without screaming or insults. And remember, your parents have lived longer than you - don't discount their experience and knowledge. **Communicate!** Your parents want to know what's going on in your life. If you keep them in the dark they won't know when you need their help or whether they can trust you. Tell them what you're up to, share your thoughts and feelings with them, and seek their advice for your problems (you don't have to take it). Communication builds closeness. **Build Trust.** Trust is your key to freedom. The way to build trust is through honesty and responsibility. Honesty means you don't lie or manipulate. Responsibility means you are reliable and can be counted on to use good judgment. When your parents trust you, it's a lot easier for them to say "yes." Remember that these guidelines must work both ways. If, on occasions, your parents violate any of these guidelines, talk to them about it. Pick a time when you are both calm and feeling good toward each other (never when you're angry). Then, explain to them what they did, how it makes you feel, and what you'd like them to do instead. Sometimes these guidelines don't work because we can only control what we do, not what our parents do, sometimes we are truly helpless to transform a bad relationship. If this is the case, try to use these guidelines to at least improve things a little, and talk with a trusted adult who may be able to help you.

Questions

1. What do you do that really bugs your parents and what do your parents do that really bugs you?
2. Do you think your parents understand the changes you are going through at this age? If not, what could you do to help them understand?
3. What are some things you would like to talk to your parents about but feel you can't? Why don't you think you can talk to them about these things? How have you tried? What happened?
4. Does the amount of freedom your parents give you change from time to time? What are the factors that influence those changes?

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Activity:

Put yourself in your parents' shoes and answer these questions for the following scenarios:

- What would be my worst fear?
- How could you talk to me about these fears?
- How could you show me that you are ready for this responsibility?
- What would be a fair solution to this problem?

(Girls) You are going out with your friends to a big school dance. You've bought some new clothes and jewelry for the event. You spend a lot of time getting dressed and putting on your make-up and you think you look great. But when you come downstairs, your folks go through the roof and say that girls your age shouldn't dress that way - dress is too short, too much makeup, etc..

(Boys) You have a friend who always gets in trouble. Your parents want you to stop hanging out with him. You still like him and don't think your parents understand. He asks you to spend Saturday with him at the mall. Now you have to get your parents' permission.

Thought Provoker: Has there ever been a time when your parents trusted you and you let them down? What happened? Was it harder to get them to trust you afterwards? Were you able to rebuild the lost trust? How? What have you learned from this experience?

Conclusion:

Maintaining a great relationship between parents and adolescents during middle school years can be challenging for each party. There are steps to making sure that the adolescent is able to develop skills that enable him/her to grow and "fly" unsupported. Respect-It is important to respect each other because without mutual respect any relationship will be an unhappy one. Step 2-Communicate! Your parents want to know what is going on in your life. Step 3- Build trust because trust is your key to freedom. These guidelines work both ways. Unfortunately, these guidelines don't always work. Since we can only control what we do, and not what our parents do, sometimes we are truly helpless to transform a bad relationship. If this is the case, try to use these guidelines to at least improve things a little, and talk with a trusted adult who may be able to help you.