

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### Memory tree

Want to help your middle grader remember what she learns? Share this tip. Suggest that she draw a “tree” of important information. For example, she could label the trunk “the parts of speech” and the branches “noun,” “verb,” and “adjective.”

### DID YOU KNOW?

Regular, moderate exercise boosts quality of sleep and reduces muscle tension. Riding a bike, walking a dog, playing basketball, rollerblading—all these activities can help your middle grader rest better and have more energy throughout the day.

### Video violence

According to some experts, video game violence may be more harmful than watching violence on TV. That’s because some games encourage your middle grader to use aggression to solve conflicts. Help your child choose games that don’t involve fighting by checking their ratings or reading online reviews.

Source: “Violent Video Games Can Increase Aggression,” American Psychological Association, [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

### Worth quoting

“Learn from the mistakes of others—you can never live long enough to make them all yourself.”

John Luther

### Just for fun

**Q:** What is the cheapest time to call your friends long-distance?

**A:** When they’re not home!



## Boosting confidence

A low grade or a disagreement with a friend can make your middle grader doubt himself. But regaining his confidence is important to his success—in school and in life. A confident child dives into challenging projects and is more apt to speak his mind when confronted with peer pressure.

Try these tips to put your middle grader’s confidence back on track.

### Look ahead

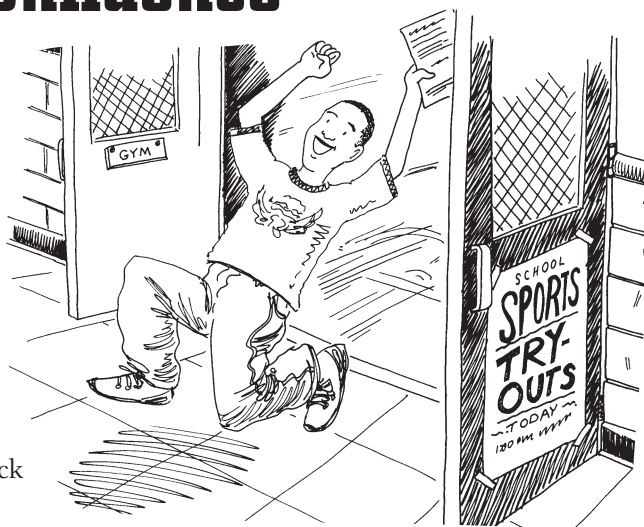
Have your child think about an upcoming event—a project, a test, or an athletic competition—and find ways to improve his skills. For example, he might study an extra half-hour each evening or shoot a few hoops before school in the morning. Focusing on moving forward by figuring out a way to do better next time can boost his chances of success.

### Ask for help

Many kids lack confidence because they think they have to be good at everything. Explain to your middle grader that everyone needs help sometimes. If he’s struggling with algebra, for instance, you might suggest that he find a study partner. Realizing his limits and knowing when to seek help are signs of confidence, not weakness, and can keep your child from feeling like a failure.

### Play up strengths

Encourage your middle grader to keep his strong points in mind. Maybe he can say, “I try hard to be a loyal friend,” or “I brought up my science grade.” By emphasizing his

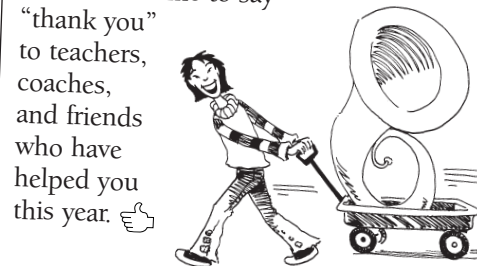


good qualities instead of comparing himself to others, your child will learn to see himself in a more positive way. 👍

## End-of-year checklist

The end of the school year is a busy time. Your middle grader can use this list to tie up loose ends before the final day:

- ☑ Turn in all textbooks, sports equipment, uniforms, band instruments, sheet music, and books on loan from the school library.
- ☑ Check the lost-and-found to recover items that you misplaced during the school year.
- ☑ Pick up a summer calendar of events or next year’s schedule if they’re available.
- ☑ Take the time to say “thank you”

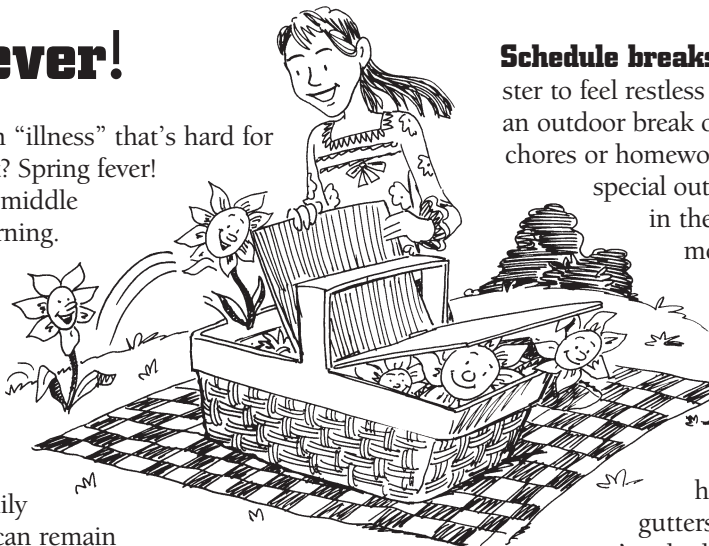


to teachers, coaches, and friends who have helped you this year. 👍

# Cure spring fever!

Warm, sunny days often bring an “illness” that’s hard for middle graders to ignore. What is it? Spring fever! Here are some ways to “cure” your middle grader and keep her focused on learning.

**Stick to routines.** Make home life as predictable as possible by continuing the same routines that kept your household running through the winter months. *Example:* Maintain the same bedtimes, and expect that chores will still be done. When family life stays on an even keel, learning can remain a central focus.



**Schedule breaks.** It’s natural for your youngster to feel restless at this time of year. Suggest an outdoor break of 15 to 30 minutes between chores or homework assignments. Planning a special outing on the weekend (a picnic in the park, a movie) may help motivate your child to finish her work.

**Keep it simple.** Spring can bring extra responsibilities for the whole family—from last-minute school projects to household duties such as cleaning gutters. Avoid overloading everyone’s schedule by choosing only one extra task to accomplish each week. 👍



## Q & A Inhalant abuse?

**Q** *I’ve noticed some strange stains on my middle grader’s fingers. He says it’s nothing, but what could it mean?*

**A** It’s possible your child is using inhalants, also known as sniffing or huffing. Inhalant abuse is the intentional breathing of the gas or vapor of substances such as paint or glue to get high. According to the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition, one in five students have used an inhalant by eighth grade. The effects can be severe, including brain damage, loss of muscle control, heart attack, and even death.

If your child is using inhalants, you might notice red eyes or nose, slurred speech, nausea, paint stains on his fingers or face, and a strong chemical odor on his clothes.

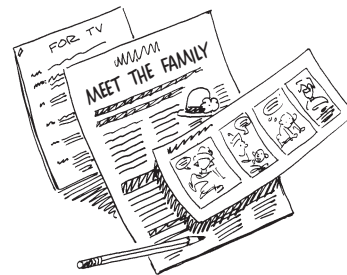
For more information on inhalant abuse, call the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service at 800-662-HELP (4357). 👍



## Activity Witty writing

Most middle graders could use more writing practice. Try these activities to inspire your kids to write while having a good laugh:

- Your children probably have a favorite TV comedy, and chances are they know the characters inside out. Encourage them to write their own episode. Suggest that they include dialogue and descriptions of where the action takes place.
- Have your kids design the front page of a family newspaper. They might come up with sections such as “Family Blunders” or “Meet the Family.” Invite them to write a funny review of a holiday dinner or an article about an eventful family vacation.
- Encourage your middle graders to make up comic strips that feature friends or relatives. They’ll get practice telling stories—and tickle everyone’s funny bone in the process! 👍



## Parent to Parent Building family bonds

With growing kids and demanding careers, our family has the same challenge that many others face these days: staying connected.

One decision we made early on was to eat together once a day. Sharing a

meal, whether it’s breakfast or dinner, gives us time to talk about our day and what’s coming up in the next week. We keep the conversation light—a story we heard during the day, or something we’d like to do over the summer. We usually leave serious matters for other times.

Everyone enjoys the chance to talk and learn more about one another. On our busiest days, it may be the only time we’re all together. Sometimes it takes a bit of juggling, but it’s definitely worth the effort. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.  
3035 Valley Avenue, Suite 103, Winchester, VA 22601  
540-723-0322 • rfeustomer@aspenpublishers.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540