

CAUTION:
Teenager Under Construction

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TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOOK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Learning Objectives	2
Program Summary	3
Student Activities	
1. Pre/Post Test	5
2. Countdown	7
3. Changes Checklist	8
4. A Whole New World	11
5. How Do I Slice My Time?	12
6. Dealing with Stress	14
7. The Middle School Mirror	15
8. Dear Lizzie	16
9. Second Chance	18
10. Hygiene Quiz	19
11. You're Not the Only One	21
12. Perfectly Popular	22
Fact Sheets	
1. Middle School Changes	24
2. Time Management	25
3. Sample Schedules	26
4. Remember to Relax	28
5. Tips for Surviving Puberty	29
6. Hygiene Basics	30
7. Strategies for Dealing with Peer Pressure	32
8. Making Good Decisions	33
9. Communication Tips	34
10. Resources	36
11. Bibliography	37
Other Programs from Human Relations Media	38

The old axiom “Nothing is constant but change” is especially appropriate for students in the middle school years. Developing emotions, shifting friendships, new intellectual interests and a body going through the hills and valleys of puberty combine to make these years a period of intense growth and transition. The awkward pre-teens who arrive at middle school will not be the same by the time they move on to high school. As they navigate the ups and downs of this dynamic time, middle school students are certainly “teens under construction.” But while these changes are exciting, they can also be frustrating and confusing. Now more than ever, young teens need guidance from their parents or guardians, teachers and counselors.

Aside from new academic responsibilities, middle school students must contend with intense emotions and changing moods. Some of these changes can be traced to physical and hormonal development, while others spring from confusion about how to deal with new demands and friendships. Teens may find themselves wondering why they now react differently to things that never bothered them before.

Self-image becomes much more central during the middle school years. Suddenly, young people may become worried about questions like *Do I look alright? Am I normal? What’s going on with my body?* Students who can turn to a trusted adult for advice about these pivotal emotional transitions will find it easier to manage the day-to-day challenges of middle school.

Social patterns and boy-girl relationships are also in a tumult for middle schoolers. At this age, young people often meet new friends, drift apart from old companions and discover a new interest in the opposite sex. The need to connect with a group of peers becomes stronger, but students also strive to become more independent and make their own decisions. At this time, peer pressure and the desire to be popular and accepted can have a greater effect than ever before. Many teens also experience the exhilaration and confusion of crushes, romance and dating for the first time.

Mental development is also underway during the early teen years. Students may struggle with new classes and subjects or become overwhelmed by trying to explore too many new activities. Basic needs like hygiene and sleep may be neglected; many teens simply cannot manage to fit everything in. This period is a wonderful opportunity for personal growth, but teens need to learn how to stay organized and manage their time as well.

Using a light-hearted style, *Caution: Teenager Under Construction* traces the complex changes faced by middle school students. Young people who are prepared for the transitions that await—and who understand that these changes are perfectly normal—will be better able to handle middle school’s challenges with maturity and humor. Armed with the support and guidance of trusted adults, these “teenagers under construction” will emerge successfully from early adolescence, well-prepared for the next steps in life.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After watching the video *Caution: Teenager Under Construction* and participating in the class activities included in this Teacher's Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- describe many of the emotional and physical changes of puberty
- recognize that the changes they are experiencing are a normal part of growing up
- discuss how same-sex friendships and boy-girl relationships often change as teens get older
- examine the stress that is caused by peer pressure and the desire to be popular
- plan ways to explore new interests
- use schedules and planners to manage their time wisely
- name healthy ways to deal with emotional stress
- recognize their own positive traits
- appreciate how important it is to have a healthy self-image
- understand the importance of controlling their emotions
- explain the basics of good hygiene
- understand how to make good decisions
- communicate with peers, teachers and other adults clearly and respectfully

After an opening montage of pictures of many different preteens superimposed over the structure of a building under construction, the program begins by introducing the two hosts. In mock seriousness, they announce they are “mostly constructed teenagers,” but then they show viewers images of themselves taken several years earlier. “A few years can make a huge difference in how someone looks, especially right around when we become teenagers,” a host notes.

The hosts explain that this has a lot to do with puberty—which deals with the development of secondary sex characteristics. “But one thing that may get a little lost here is that as our bodies change, we may feel uncoordinated, spill things and trip.” Also, the host notes, we may feel restless and have trouble sitting still. Another thing is that “there isn’t an exact timetable for all the changes our bodies go through.” The hosts explain that although we all develop at different rates, many young people worry they aren’t normal if they don’t look a certain way by a certain point. A cartoon teen demonstrates the range of fears preteens may have—too tall, too thin, ears too big, too smart, too dumb, too loud—“the terrible toos.”

Viewers then meet school counselor Julia Taylor, who notes that it’s easy for middle school students to focus on their flaws. She advises viewers to make a list of things they’re good at and things they like about themselves. “Focus on things that you can change, things you’re good at and things that you really like about yourself,” she says.

The hosts then discuss how a preteen’s brain changes during puberty. “Our thought processes get more complex. We get more curious,” a host says. Several middle school students comment on their changing thoughts, then the hosts point out that it’s common to question things that used to be accepted. “When certain people try to have more control over me... I try to break off from that because I have my own ideas and opinions now,” says one preteen, Regan.

The hosts go on to note that middle school students sometimes drive adults and peers crazy with their questioning. “I find that when they say something I’ll always find a way to contradict it or question what they’re saying,” acknowledges another teen, Logan. “Why?” becomes a huge question: Why do I have to do this stupid homework? Why are you always taking his side? Why can’t I wear what I want to?

“Why not?” is just as important a question for preteens, the hosts say. “We may crave adventure and want to experiment more,” says one. Several teens describe how they’ve become more adventurous, from doing more things on their own to trying new sports. As a cartoon character morphs to represent different pursuits, the hosts explain that preteens like to experiment with interests, from the environment to music to politics.

“With so many possible interests... it’s hard to concentrate,” notes a host. Several middle school students share their feelings of being frazzled, disorganized, stressed and overwhelmed.

“It’s easy to be overwhelmed in middle school by all the different things that you like,” notes counselor Taylor. She explains that part of middle school is learning how to learn.

The hosts then explain that part of growing up is being more independent. One teen, Remy, talks about how she is no longer afraid to take the subway alone. Stephen remarks that gaining more independence means taking responsibility for his own actions.

The hosts then move on to the subject of parent-preteen relationships. Deborah, another preteen, adds that her new independence is changing her relationship with her parents. Several teens comment that they sometimes run into conflict with their parents because they don’t want to be treated like a baby or always follow the rules. “Sometimes we might want to be more independent than others. We still depend on our parents,” says one host. The preteens talk about how they still connect with their families.

“While parents remain a really important part of our lives... our relationships with our friends become more and more important,” explains a host—and this can get confusing. The preteens talk about how their friendships have changed since childhood; “Now I don’t know who I want to hang out with... I feel that I’m ruining some friendships,” says Regan. The hosts interject that it is common for friendships to change as middle schoolers meet new people.

Next, the hosts turn to popularity. “A lot of times people think that being popular means belonging to a particular group of friends,” one host says. The preteens discuss cliques and the newfound importance of being liked by everyone. The hosts then pose an important question: “What do I want in my friends?” Several preteens answer, saying they want people who make them happy, who are nice and who care for others. “When you’re popular, you have to know other people’s feelings and know where they’re coming from,” says a preteen, Lisa.

The hosts move on to relationships with the opposite sex. Several preteens talk about the wide range of feelings and experiences middle schoolers may have when it comes to dating, from “Girls are 90 percent of my life” to “I don’t really get nervous because they’re my friends and they’re not like my boyfriend or something.”

Next, the hosts reassure viewers that there are places to go for help when they are feeling overwhelmed, stressed out or lonely. Taylor notes the importance of having a trusted person to talk to—whether it’s a school counselor, a teacher, or, “Believe it or not, you can usually go to your parents because they’ve been there too.” She suggests that preteens find someone who will just listen and not always give advice.

Finally, the hosts remind viewers to focus on their strengths and talents. “The middle school years are a journey with many milestones,” they say. Everyone travels at his or her own pace and detours are common—and adolescence isn’t the final destination. “The teen years themselves have their own milestones... In fact, the journey is an adventure that lasts a lifetime,” they say.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Name: _____

Pre/Post Test

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. TRUE or FALSE: Everyone progresses through puberty at the same rate. _____
2. TRUE or FALSE: It's rare for a preteen to worry if he or she is normal or not. _____
3. TRUE or FALSE: Many middle school students become more curious and ask more questions than they used to. _____
4. TRUE or FALSE: Middle school is often a time to experiment with lots of different interests. _____
5. TRUE or FALSE: The more independent you become, the less responsibility you have for yourself. _____
6. TRUE or FALSE: Relationships with friends often become a lot more important in middle school. _____
7. TRUE or FALSE: Preteens usually have the same types of friendships with the same people as they did in elementary school. _____
8. TRUE or FALSE: Few preteens care about what others think of them. _____
9. TRUE or FALSE: It's normal for a middle school student to be interested in the opposite sex—and it's also normal to not be interested. _____
10. TRUE or FALSE: Whenever you are stressed out or overwhelmed, it's a good idea to talk to a trusted adult about your feelings. _____

The Answer Key appears on the next page.

Name: _____

Answer Key

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. TRUE or FALSE: Everyone progresses through puberty at the same rate. | FALSE |
| 2. TRUE or FALSE: It's rare for a preteen to worry if he or she is normal or not. | FALSE |
| 3. TRUE or FALSE: Many middle school students become more curious and ask more questions than they used to. | TRUE |
| 4. TRUE or FALSE: Middle school is often a time to experiment with lots of different interests. | TRUE |
| 5. TRUE or FALSE: The more independent you become, the less responsibility you have for yourself. | FALSE |
| 6. TRUE or FALSE: Relationships with friends often become a lot more important in middle school. | TRUE |
| 7. TRUE or FALSE: Preteens usually have the same types of friendships with the same people as they did in elementary school. | FALSE |
| 8. TRUE or FALSE: Few preteens care about what others think of them. | FALSE |
| 9. TRUE or FALSE: It's normal for a middle school student to be interested in the opposite sex—and it's also normal to not be interested. | TRUE |
| 10. TRUE or FALSE: Whenever you are stressed out or overwhelmed, it's a good idea to talk to a trusted adult about your feelings. | TRUE |

Name: _____

More homework, new classmates, a morphing body—with all the stressful changes going on in middle school, it can be hard to focus on what’s good and positive in your world! Here’s your chance to remind yourself about the good things in your life by filling out the countdown below.

Five things I like to do are...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Four of my best qualities are...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Three people who are important to me are...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Two things I do well are...

1. _____
2. _____


One thing I dream about doing someday is...

1. _____

Name: _____

This sheet is private. You will not have to share it with anyone.

Get your markers, colored pencils or crayons ready! Read through this checklist and mark a colored “X” on the line before each item on the list. Use the color code below:

- BLUE = This hasn't happened to me yet, or I haven't noticed it. 
- GREEN = This describes/described me, but it isn't/wasn't frustrating or stressful.
- YELLOW = This describes/described me, and it is/was a little frustrating or stressful.
- ORANGE = This describes/described me, and it is/was quite frustrating or stressful.
- RED = This describes/described me, and it is/was very frustrating or stressful.

Physical Changes

- _____ My muscles and joints feel sore.
- _____ It's hard to sit still for a long period of time.
- _____ I feel less coordinated than usual.
- _____ My clothes feel like they don't fit right.
- _____ It's hard to get comfortable in bed when I'm trying to fall asleep.
- _____ I'm growing earlier or later than everybody else my age.
- _____ My voice is changing.
- _____ People make comments about me maturing.
- _____ I want privacy when I'm changing.

Mental Changes

- _____ It's hard to concentrate for very long on one thing.
- _____ I think and/or worry about the future a lot.
- _____ I get in trouble for always asking, “Why?”
- _____ I spend a lot of time trying to figure things out.
- _____ It's hard for me to stay organized and remember things.
- _____ I get mad at myself when I do something wrong.
- _____ I don't do as well in school as I did when I was younger.
- _____ I get bored easily, and I'm always looking for new things to do.
- _____ Sometimes it's hard to fall asleep because my mind is racing.

This activity is continued on the following page.

Name: _____

Social Changes

- _____ I have a different group of friends than I used to.
- _____ I have a new best friend.
- _____ I want to be left alone more than I used to.
- _____ I work hard at being accepted by my friends.
- _____ I worry that my appearance is different from everyone else's.
- _____ I find that I'm not really myself when I'm with a group.
- _____ I get teased more by members of the opposite gender.
- _____ I feel pressure to have a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- _____ I find it hard to be "just friends" with members of the opposite gender.

Emotional Changes

- _____ I'm experiencing new and/or confusing feelings.
- _____ I have very intense feelings.
- _____ I have frequent mood swings.
- _____ Sometimes I say things that I regret later.
- _____ Sometimes I feel like my emotions and moods are out of control.
- _____ I get frustrated by my friends' moods.
- _____ I feel depressed.
- _____ Sometimes I feel silly or giggly for no reason.
- _____ I get upset by things that never bothered me before.
- _____ I feel like people won't leave me alone when I'm having a bad day.
- _____ I have trouble relieving my stress in a healthy way.

Expectations

- _____ I feel like adults expect a lot from me.
- _____ I have more responsibilities than I used to.
- _____ I'm expected to make my own decisions more than I used to.
- _____ My parents or guardians ask me a lot more questions about my personal life.
- _____ I'm involved in lots of activities.
- _____ I feel like people yell at me a lot.
- _____ People expect me to do things that don't interest me anymore.
- _____ Whenever I make a decision, someone tells me it's the wrong thing to do.

This activity is continued on the following page.

Name: _____

INTERPRETATION:

Some of the items on this checklist can be very stressful, but guess what? Almost *everybody* experiences these things as they move from childhood to adulthood. They are all totally normal.

If you notice a lot of red marks on your checklist, it's a good idea to talk to an adult about the stress in your life. Parents or guardians, teachers and counselors are all good people to talk to. Remember, many adults went through the same things when they were your age.

Growing up isn't easy: Don't feel like you have to do it all on your own.

Name: _____

Middle school is a great time to explore new interests. You're probably more curious about different ideas and activities than you used to be—and your school or town probably offers a long list of ways to get involved. As you become more independent, you can begin to explore all kinds of new things. What are some of your new interests? How can you explore them further?

Think of five new things that interest you. They can be clubs, sports, after-school activities, school subjects or hobbies—anything else that catches your eye. Then think of one realistic step you can take to get more involved and learn more about that interest.

Examples:

Interest: *Snowboarding*
How can I explore? *Take lessons at a ski resort.*

Interest: *Photography*
How can I explore? *Save up for a digital camera, take photography as an elective.*

Interest 1:	
How can I explore?	

Interest 2:	
How can I explore?	

Interest 3:	
How can I explore?	

Interest 4:	
How can I explore?	

Interest 5:	
How can I explore?	

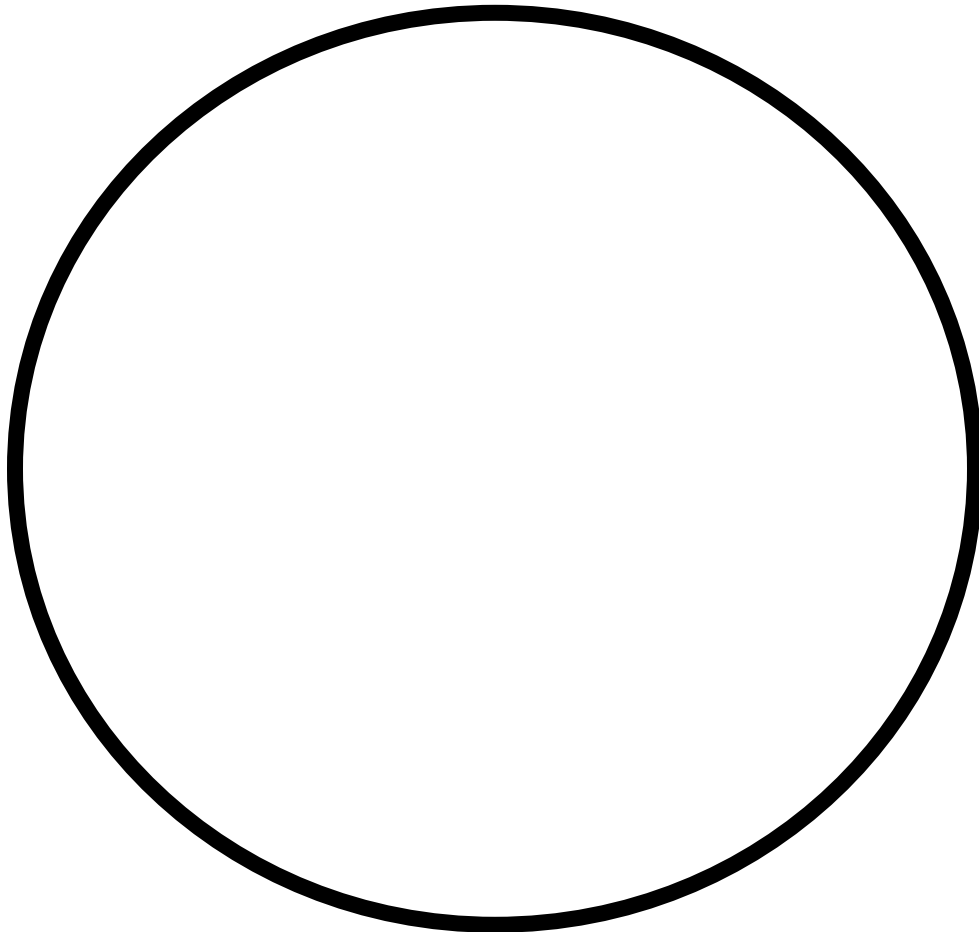
Name: _____

If your day were a pizza, how would it be sliced? Imagine that you could slice up your day according to how much time you spend doing different activities. How big would your “sleeping” slice be? How about your “doing homework” slice? In terms of percentages, what percent of time do you spend doing various things?

PART ONE: The pizza outline below represents a typical 24-hour day in your life. Fill it in by drawing slices for the following activities.

- school
- homework
- after-school activities (make a separate slice for each one)
- relaxing (reading, watching TV, etc.)
- spending time with friends or family
- exercising
- sleeping
- sports or physical activity
- other (specify).

Make sure you draw a slice for each thing on the list. The more time you spend doing an activity, the bigger your slice should be. You can write down the percentage of time that each activity takes up. (Remember that your total should not exceed 100% for a full day!)



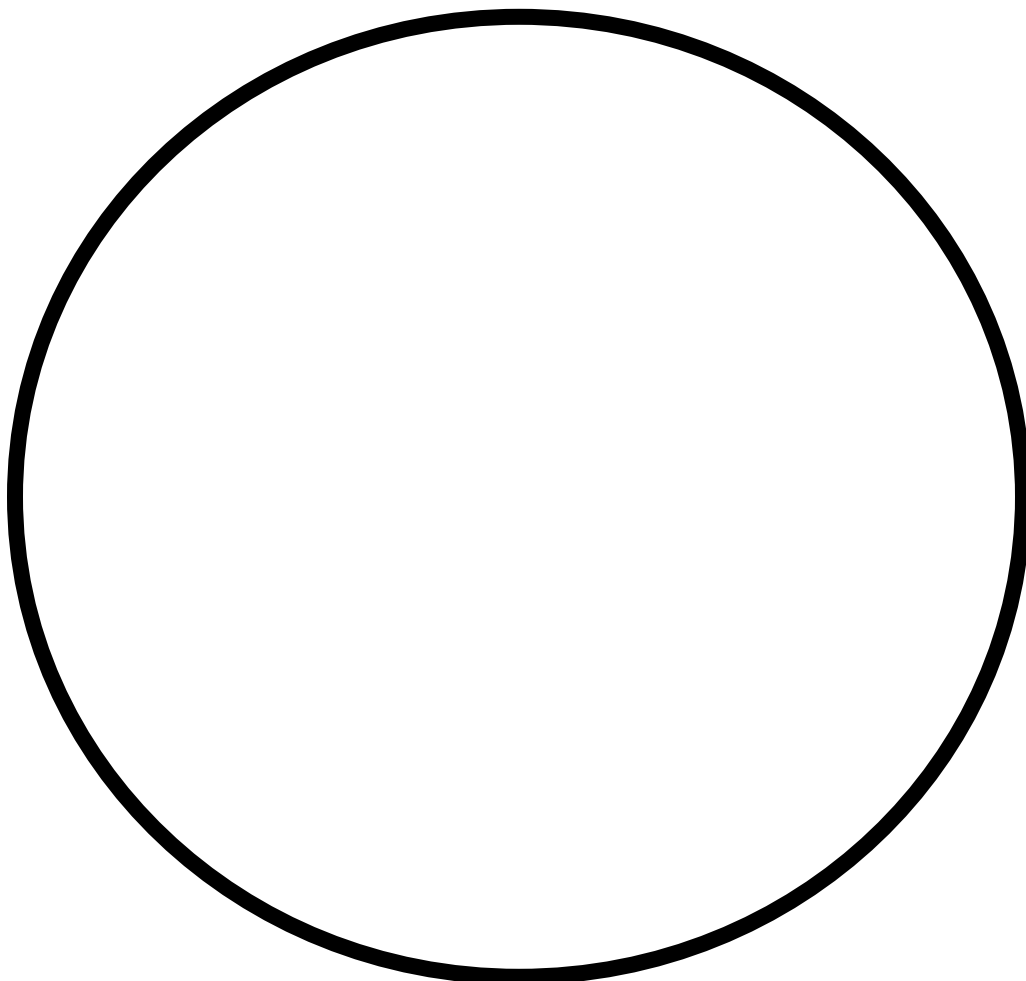
This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

HOW DO I SLICE MY TIME?

PART TWO: Take a look at your pizza diagram. Are your slices in the right proportion? Maybe you spend too much time playing video games, or not enough time sleeping. How would you change your slices to make your perfect day? Read the *Time Management* fact sheet, and then jot down the changes you would like to make here:

The pizza diagram below represents a perfect 24-hour day in your life. Fill it in by drawing slices for the same activities you included in Part One, but also add the changes you noted above. Make sure you give yourself enough time for the things you need to do—but don't forget to slice enough time for fun, relaxation and sleep!



Name: _____

Everybody feels stressed out sometimes—arguing with a friend, failing a big test or having lots of homework are all things that can make you feel upset or overwhelmed. Feeling stressed out is normal, but you shouldn't let those emotions take over. Instead, try one of the many healthy ways out there to relieve stress.

PART ONE: As a class, make a list of ways to relax and relieve stress. Each person will contribute one suggestion. Before you begin making your class list, write down a few of your favorite stress relievers here. (That way, you'll have a backup if someone else names one of your ideas before you do.) Make sure all of your stress relievers are healthy activities.

Examples: take a bubble bath, play basketball, watch a funny movie

My personal favorite stress relievers:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now compile a class list of stress relievers. Each person should share one suggestion—your teacher will write them all on the board. Copy the list onto a separate sheet of paper.

PART TWO: Hold a class contest to see who can design the best “Stress Reliever” poster. Your poster should include the combined class list and any creative illustrations that match the stress-busting tips. You can use paint, glitter, magazine pictures, photos—anything to make your poster stand out! Give your poster an original title.

When everyone has completed his or her poster, display them all in the classroom. Let everyone have a chance to look at the posters, and then vote on your class favorite. Your class may also decide to vote for several different awards. For example:

- *Best Overall*
- *Funniest*
- *Most Creative*

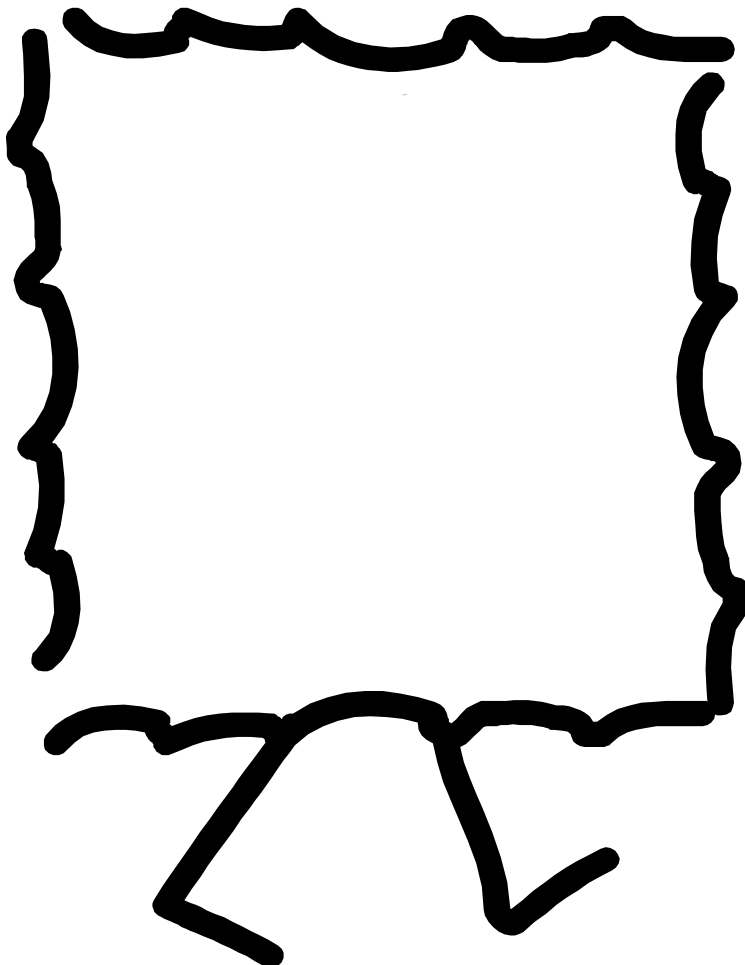
Hang your favorites in your classroom or the school hallway. And don't forget to try some new stress-busting techniques!

Name: _____

This sheet is private. You will not have to share it with anyone.

What does “self-image” mean? Your self-image is the mental picture you have of yourself. It includes the way you look—your physical characteristics—and also the qualities that can’t be seen—your personality traits. People with a healthy self-image focus on the positive things about themselves as much as possible. But sometimes it’s hard to be positive. You may look in your “mental mirror” and see too many things you don’t like—big braces, unruly hair or the wrong kind of clothes. That’s when you know it’s time to give your self-image a makeover!

PART ONE: In the space below, draw a picture of yourself that only shows positive things. Your picture should exaggerate your favorite qualities—maybe it’s your smile or the fact that you are a good listener. Include three **physical** characteristics and three **personality** traits. If you’re really having trouble thinking of six things, ask a friend, a parent or a teacher what he or she thinks your best qualities are.

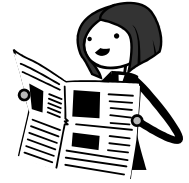


PART TWO: Answer these questions on the back of this page.

1. What people, places or things make you feel really good about yourself? Why?
2. What people, places or things make you feel bad about yourself? Why?
3. Who or what most influences the way you look (teen magazines, TV shows, parents, friends, etc.)? Why?
4. Do you think most middle school students have a healthy self-image? Why or why not?
5. What can you do to improve your own self-image?

Name: _____

PART ONE: Your friend Lizzie writes an advice column in the school newspaper, but this week she is really busy and needs your help answering some letters. Read the following letters, and then write a response to each person on a separate sheet of paper. Each response should be one to two paragraphs long.



Dear Lizzie,

I've been feeling so left out lately. My best friend got a part in the school play, and all he does now is go to rehearsal and hang out with the other people in the cast. It's like he has a whole new group of friends and no time for me. How can I get things back to the way they were in elementary school? —Sincerely, Left Behind

Dear Lizzie,

At first I really liked sixth grade. I met this cool girl, Hillary, and we started eating lunch together and hanging out after school. We always had so much fun. But then Hillary started doing some stuff that I didn't like—she always makes fun of this one short guy in our class, and yesterday she said she would bring her older sister's cigarettes to school so we could smoke. I don't want to do stuff like that, but I'm afraid Hillary won't want to be my friend if I say so. What should I do? —Sincerely, Pressured

Dear Lizzie,

Audrey and I have been friends ever since she moved in across the street from me. She's a cool girl—she likes video games and kickball and stuff like that—but I only like her as a friend. A few days ago she accidentally dropped a note she was passing to her friend Lisa, and somebody grabbed it and read it out loud. It said she has a crush on me! I'm so embarrassed! I've been ignoring her ever since. I still want to be friends, but I don't know what to say to her. —Sincerely, Crushed

Dear Lizzie,

Cameron and I have been best friends since second grade, but now things are different. It's like we don't have anything in common anymore. We're taking different classes. Cameron decided to join Chess Club, while I want to do Art Club. I don't want to hurt Cameron's feelings or anything, but it's just not that much fun to hang out together now. Am I a bad friend? What should I do? —Sincerely, Drifting Apart

Dear Lizzie,

I really like this boy in my science class, but I can't tell if he likes me back. He spends most of his time sitting with his guy friends, but once in a while he knocks my book off my desk or pulls my hair. My friend Tina says he likes me, but my other friend Amanda says he's just being a jerk. How can I tell? —Sincerely, Mixed Up

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

PART TWO: Now that you've advised others, it's time to think about you. Answer the questions below.

1. Has your group of friends changed since elementary school a lot, a little or not at all? Why do you think this is so?

2. Have you ever drifted apart from someone who used to be a good friend? What was the experience like? Why do you think it happened? How did you feel?

3. Have you ever felt pressured by a friend to do something you didn't want to do? Describe the experience. Do you think it is harder to resist peer pressure from friends than from people you don't know well? Why or why not?

4. Do you think it's hard for boys and girls to be "just friends?" Why or why not? Do you have friends of the opposite gender? Are those friendships different from your friendships with members of the same gender? If so, how?

Name: _____

The changes caused by puberty can be distressing, even though the final result—becoming a grownup—is exciting. Puberty means a lot of things, including dealing with mood swings and sudden strong emotions. Sometimes it can be hard to keep your cool. Read the dialogues below and think about how the young people are speaking to others. Rewrite their words so they have the same message, but with a more respectful tone. Using respectful words is easier when we take a minute to cool off before answering. For more tips on how to cool off, check out the *Remember to Relax* fact sheet.

1. Mom: *“Do I need to buy you some deodorant?”*

Son/Daughter: *“Mom, please! You’re so annoying, you always make a big deal out of everything! Do you have to talk about it in front of everyone?”*

Son/Daughter (second chance):

2. Dad: *“Growing up can be tough. Let me know if you want to talk about anything.”*

Son/Daughter: *“Talk? Why do we always have to talk? Don’t you think I can take care of anything by myself?”*

Son/Daughter (second chance):

3. Brother: *“About time you got out of the bathroom.”*

Brother/Sister: *“Shut up! It’s none of your business! Why can’t I ever have any privacy?”*

Brother/Sister (second chance):

4. Friend 1: *“Can we talk? You always give good advice, and I can’t talk to anyone else.”*

Friend 2: *“Why is it always about you? You shouldn’t expect me to solve all your problems. Maybe you should help me once in a while!”*

Friend 2 (second chance):

Name: _____

How much do you know about good hygiene? Find out by taking this quiz.

1. Acne and greasy hair are a result of:
 - a) A bad diet
 - b) Overactive sebaceous (oil) glands in your skin
 - c) Not enough exercise

2. What's the best way to take care of oily hair?
 - a) Shampoo and condition three times a day
 - b) Use lots of styling products
 - c) Wash it every day or every other day with a shampoo formulated for oily hair

3. What's the best way to deal with pimples or zits? Circle all that apply.
 - a) Scrub your face with soap three or more times a day
 - b) Squeeze or pop your zits
 - c) Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables and drink lots of water
 - d) Choose facial products that are marked "non-comedogenic" or "non-acnegenic"
 - e) Go to bed with your makeup on
 - f) Wash your face after exercising to remove sweat
 - g) Choose an over-the-counter acne product containing benzoyl peroxide and/or salicylic acid

4. TRUE or FALSE? Antiperspirant and deodorant are the same thing.

5. TRUE or FALSE? Body odor and bad breath are caused by bacteria.

6. What's the best way to fight body odor?
 - a) Bathe every day, wear clean clothes, and wear antiperspirant/deodorant
 - b) Use lots of cologne or perfume
 - c) Avoid people on hot days

7. TRUE or FALSE? By middle school, all guys and girls should be shaving their facial or body hair.

8. Which would be a better way to shave?
 - a) Use a sharp razor and shaving cream or gel
 - b) Use a dull razor and cold water, no soap

The Answer Key appears on the next page.

ANSWER KEY

1. b) Sebaceous glands are found all over your skin, especially on your face and on your scalp. Normally, these glands produce oil to keep your skin soft and your hair shiny and waterproof. The hormones of puberty, however, can make the sebaceous glands produce too much oil, resulting in zits or oily hair.
2. c) You usually don't need to wash your hair more than once a day. If you're having a real problem with oil, a shampoo that's specially formulated for oily hair may help. Styling products can make the problem worse by *adding* oil to your hair.
3. c), d), f), and g)
Washing your face is important to get rid of dead skin cells, sweat and excess oil, but once or twice a day is enough. Washing too often or scrubbing can actually make acne worse by irritating and drying your skin. Choosing facial products marked "non-comedogenic" also helps because they won't clog your pores. If you feel like you need an over-the-counter acne face wash, ask an adult to help you choose one—many of these products contain benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid. A healthy diet can help clear up your skin, too. What you shouldn't do is squeeze your zits (it can spread bacteria and cause scars) or sleep with makeup on (it can clog pores).
4. FALSE. Deodorant masks body odor, but antiperspirant prevents or dries up sweat.
5. TRUE. Odor-causing bacteria can multiply on your skin or in your mouth. Bathing, brushing your teeth and flossing daily will help control them.
6. a) Regular bathing with soap and clean clothes will keep you feeling fresh. If you sweat a lot, you might want to try wearing cotton clothes, underwear and socks because cotton absorbs sweat well.
7. FALSE. Everyone develops at different times: Some middle school students won't need to shave. Even if they do have facial or body hair, there's no rule that says everyone has to remove it. If you want to shave or otherwise remove hair on your face, legs or armpits, that's fine. If you don't, that's fine too.
8. a) A sharp razor with shaving cream or gel prevents cuts and irritation. Warm water softens the skin. Remember to go slowly!

Name: _____

Growing up can be difficult, but don't forget—you're not the only one! All your peers are going through the same things, and all the adults you know went through them, too. Ask the most accomplished adult you know about her middle school years, and you might be surprised about the awkward moments and frustrations she remembers! Find out more about an adult's experiences with puberty by interviewing a parent, other relative or a friend who is over 25.

PART ONE: Get permission to conduct your interview. Then take along a notebook and ask the following questions. Write down the person's answers. Ask him or her to let you borrow two photos—one of him when he was in middle school if possible and one of him or her now.

1. What years were you in middle school (6th-8th grade)? *Example: 1979-1982.*
2. What kinds of music, movies and fashions were popular at that time?
3. What were your favorite activities in middle school? What were your hobbies and interests?
4. What job/interests/activities do you have now? Is there a connection between what you liked back then and what you enjoy today?
5. What was the best part about being in middle school?
6. What was the worst part?
7. How would you describe your middle-school self?
8. What advice about growing up would you give to kids my age?

PART TWO: Display your findings on another piece of paper or small poster. Attach both pictures of your interview subject to the paper, and then write down your questions and answers. Be creative—use colors, stickers, glitter or other art supplies to make your page stand out.

PART THREE: Share your page or poster with your classmates. Read their posters. Did you find any useful advice? Did anything surprise you?

Name: _____

pop • u • lar: (adjective) Widely liked or appreciated; sought after for company; having many friends.

PART ONE

Get into groups of two to three people and read the dictionary definition of “popular” above. What kind of person comes to mind? What qualities or characteristics do you think this person would have? Why is this person so well-liked? Would a truly popular person be popular because he or she wore the “right” clothes, excluded others and made fun of people? Or would that person demonstrate other traits? Which ones?

Sometimes the “popular” kids you see in magazines, movies or maybe even in school are very different than the “widely liked or appreciated” person you just described. What qualities do you think a popular person should have? With your group, think of ten characteristics a “Perfectly Popular” student would have. Trustworthy? A good friend? Outgoing and friendly? It’s up to you!

A “Perfectly Popular Person” should be...

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

This activity is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

PART TWO

You've surely seen portrayals of popular teens in movies or on television. How do these characters compare to the "Perfectly Popular Person" you just described? How realistic are these characters? Find out more by choosing one teen-centered TV show episode or movie. Watch it with your group, taking notes on what the popular characters are like. Together, answer these questions.

Movie/Television Show Title: _____

1. How did the popular characters look? Describe their appearance.

2. How realistic is this physical appearance? Did the characters look too perfect, or did they look like ordinary teens?

3. What personality traits or qualities did the popular characters have? Describe them.

4. Were the popular characters' actions mostly kind, mostly mean or somewhere in between? Explain, using examples from the movie or episode.

5. Why do you think the director and writers decided to portray their popular characters this way? What messages are they sending to viewers? Do you think these messages are good or bad?

FACT SHEETS

Name: _____

Feeling mixed-up lately? Don't worry—middle school is a time of many changes, and it's okay to be confused. Just remember that you're normal. *Everybody* goes through puberty! Here are some totally normal changes to expect as you go.

PHYSICAL CHANGES

- You'll start to develop secondary sex characteristics (like a deeper voice for guys and a girl getting her first period)
- You might feel clumsy or uncoordinated as your body grows
- You might feel restless or find it hard to sit still

MENTAL CHANGES

- Your thoughts will get more complex
- You'll question things more than you used to
- You may want to experiment with new activities, classes and interests
- You'll crave more independence and freedom to do your own thing

SOCIAL CHANGES

- You might argue more with your family over their rules for you
- You might feel uncertain about your relationship with your parents
- Your friendships may change—you'll make new friends and lose touch with some old ones
- Being popular might become a lot more important to you
- You may become interested in dating

In middle school, it's normal to feel like you're too busy. You don't have to let the stress get to you—you just have to learn how to manage your time.

Sorting Your Time

Think about all the things you *have* to do: these include going to school, doing homework, fulfilling family responsibilities, sleeping, eating, and taking care of your hygiene. Next, think about the things you *want* to do: sports, playing video games, hanging out with your best friend. The first step to time management is separating the things you want to do from the things you definitely have to do.

Prioritizing

Prioritizing means figuring out which of your activities are the most important and which are less important. You should take care of the most important things first; for example, doing your science homework before calling your best friend on the phone. How can you decide which things are high priorities and which are low priorities?

- *Level of importance:* Do the reading project that is worth half of your grade before the ten-point health worksheet.
- *Deadlines:* If you have to have your lines memorized for the class play by tomorrow and your math test isn't until Monday, take care of the earlier deadline first.
- *Consequences:* If you're having trouble deciding between doing two things, think about the consequences of *not* doing them. The one that has more serious consequences is the one you should do first.

Scheduling

Writing out a schedule is a huge help. It can help you set aside enough time to take care of everything you need to do and keep you organized. Look at the *Sample Schedules* fact sheet for examples and tips on how to create your own.

Beating Time Wasters

Don't get caught up in these common time traps! Beat them with these tips.

- *Watching TV:* Instead of just channel surfing, only turn on the TV when you want to watch a specific show. When it's over, turn off the TV.
- *Playing video games:* Make it a reward: *I'll play after I finish my homework.*
- *Going online:* Schedule a time for going online and stick to it. If you decide to be on the computer from 6 to 6:45, make sure you stop at 6:45. Ask an adult family member to help you stay on schedule.
- *Talking on the phone:* Give yourself a limit; *I'll talk to Josh for 30 minutes, and then I'll do my chores.*

Source: "Time Management: You Vs. The Clock." *It's My Life*, PBS Kids.
<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time/index.html>

Name: _____

DAILY SCHEDULE: MONDAY

Daily Schedule Tips

- Following the example at right, fill in the day in half-hour increments. Start with the time you wake up.
- First, fill in things that you have to do at a certain time. For example, you may have to be in school from 8:30 a.m. until 3 p.m., or at practice from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- Next, schedule the remaining time with the important things you have to do. Start with your highest priorities. Find time for homework, chores and sleep, and decide how much time to spend on each one.

7:00	Wake up, shower, get ready for school
7:30	Breakfast
8:00	Bus ride to school, get notebooks organized
8:30	Class starts
9:00	Class
9:30	Class
10:00	Class
10:30	Class
11:00	Class
11:30	Lunch
12:00	Class
12:30	Class
1:00	Class
1:30	Class
2:00	Class
2:30	Class
3:00	Badminton practice
3:30	Badminton practice
4:00	Badminton practice
4:30	Badminton practice
5:00	Ride home
5:30	Shower, relax
6:00	Dinner
6:30	Chores
7:00	Homework: social studies and math
7:30	Homework: social studies and math
8:00	Study break: watch TV
8:30	Homework: English
9:00	Free time: talk to friends, listen to music
9:30	Free time

This fact sheet is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

Weekly Schedule Tips

- Use it to note big items: appointments, school deadlines, meetings and social plans.
- Carry your weekly schedule around with you so that you can write down new items immediately.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
<i>Math quiz!</i> <i>Earth Club meeting</i> <i>4 p.m.</i>	<i>Soccer practice 3-5 p.m.</i>	<i>Reading project due!</i> <i>Dinner at Carly's house 6 p.m.</i>	<i>Field trip to space museum</i>	<i>Soccer practice 3-5 p.m.</i>	<i>Group meeting 2 p.m.</i> <i>Gina's party 8 p.m.</i>	<i>Soccer game 2-3 p.m.</i>

Name: _____

Stress is something that happens to everyone. Strong feelings of sadness, anger, fear or frustration can lead to stress. The tips below will help you ride out the storm.

- Pay attention to your body. Stress can cause lots of physical problems, like a stomachache or headache. The sooner you pay attention to these signs, the sooner you can find out what's making you stressed.
- Talk to someone you trust about what's going on. Sometimes we don't even know what's stressing us out until we tell someone else. It really helps to have a friend or family member who is a good listener. (HINT: You can have more people like that in your life if you become a good listener too.)
- Do you feel tired or worn out a lot? Are you too busy? If you have too many things going on, you could be wearing yourself out. Don't be afraid to talk with an adult in your family about cutting down on after-school activities or finding other ways to reduce your stress.
- Are things stressful at home? If so, try to find someone you can talk to, like a teacher, counselor, relative or a member of the clergy.
- Take deep breaths when you feel very stressed. Just five deep breaths (breathing in slowly and then breathing out slowly) can help your mind and body relax. You can do it anywhere, any time you need a break.
- Don't let any one thing become too important in your life. Having balance between friends, family, school, chores, and fun activities is the best way to lower your stress. If any of these things is taking up most of your time or thoughts, it's probably causing you stress.

Name: _____

TIPS FOR
SURVIVING PUBERTY

- Don't feel embarrassed. The changes caused by puberty happen to everyone. They're a normal, amazing part of becoming a grownup.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. It's natural for you to be curious about what's going on. Just remember that your adult family members and other older friends went through puberty too. A question that may seem crazy to you will probably seem very normal to them.
- Get more info at your library, at bookstores, on the Web, or from an adult you trust.
- Stay healthy. Getting plenty of exercise and sleep will help you feel better, even when things are changing left and right.
- Steer clear of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Those things are bad for everyone, but they can harm a growing body even more than a grown one.
- Be good to yourself. Remember that your body is a work in progress. Instead of comparing yourself to others, celebrate what makes you unique. And remember that a healthy body is a true gift.
- Don't skip meals or diet unless a doctor says you should. Growing bodies can gain and lose weight many times before reaching their final size. Make sure to eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And go easy on snacks and sodas.
- If you're having a bad day, talk to someone. Everyone has moods of anger, sadness and confusion. The sooner you learn to talk with others about your feelings, the faster you'll learn to deal with them in a healthy way.
- Remember that the adults in your life understand what you're going through. After all, they went through puberty too.
- Remember to laugh. Puberty isn't always funny, but having a sense of humor can make it a lot more fun.

HEALTHY SKIN

1. The best way to take care of your skin is to keep it clean. Start by keeping your hands clean, since they can spread germs to the skin on other parts of your body.
2. During puberty, hormones can make your skin's sebaceous, or oil-producing, glands go into overdrive. It's important to wash your face once or twice a day with a mild cleanser to remove excess oil, sweat, and dead skin cells that can cause acne.
3. Don't wash your face too often or scrub too hard. This can irritate your skin, dry it out, and even make your skin produce more oil.
4. Don't squeeze or pop your zits—it can spread bacteria and cause scarring.
5. You don't need to spend a lot of money on fancy cleansers. If you really think you need a skin cleanser, look for one marked “non-comedogenic” or “non-acnegenic,” which means it won't clog your pores. Ask an adult family member to help you pick one out.
6. If you're very concerned about acne, ask your parents to take you to a dermatologist.

HEALTHY HAIR

1. The sebaceous glands that make your face oilier are also found on your scalp. Deal with oily hair by washing every day or every other day. You may want to try a shampoo formulated for oily hair.
2. Avoid using a lot of styling products—that can make things worse. If you must, pick products marked “oil free” or “greaseless.”

BODY BASICS

1. During puberty, your sweat glands become more active. Stay fresh by bathing every day and washing your body with soap to remove odor-causing bacteria and sweat.
2. Always wear clean clothes, socks, and underwear. Cotton is good for absorbing sweat.
3. Use an antiperspirant or a deodorant. Antiperspirants prevent or dry up sweat, while deodorants simply mask unpleasant odors.
4. Beat stinky feet by keeping your feet warm and dry and wearing clean socks. Air out your athletic shoes often.

This fact sheet is continued on the next page.

Name: _____

CLEAN TEETH

1. Keep your breath smelling nice by brushing your teeth for at least two minutes, twice a day. Brush your tongue, too, and remember to floss.
2. If you have braces, ask your dentist to show you how to keep your teeth clean.

SMOOTH SHAVING

1. If you want to shave facial or body hair, ask a parent or an older sibling to show you how.
2. Use a sharp razor and soap or shaving cream to prevent nicks.
3. Don't rush! Shave carefully to avoid cutting yourself.

Source: www.kidshealth.org/teen

Name: _____

**STRATEGIES FOR DEALING
WITH PEER PRESSURE**

Teens often recognize peer pressure after the fact, when the damage has already been done. If you can recognize it up front, when it is happening, you have won half the battle. Here are five basic strategies to help you deal with peer pressure:

1. **Recognize peer pressure.**
Recognize when you are being manipulated. Keep your antennae up for signs that someone is trying to make you feel guilty for not going along with something.

2. **Listen to your inner voice.**
Consider the effect the group is having on you. Listen to your conscience—the voice inside of you that tells you how you really feel about something. It is almost never wrong.

3. **Talk to someone outside the group.**
Talking to someone who is not involved in the situation will help you get a clearer picture of what is going on.

4. **Imagine your parents can see you.**
Think about what your parents would say or do or how they would feel if they knew what you were doing. Imagining their reaction might be enough to stop you in your tracks.

5. **Consider the risks.**
Think it through and consider the possible consequences. Ask yourself if it is worth the risks involved.

Name: _____

As you get older, you'll be faced with tougher choices. How can you make those important decisions wisely? How can you solve those big dilemmas? Developing a problem-solving strategy like the one below will help you when tricky choices come up. The next time you find yourself in a sticky situation, follow these steps to work out a solution.

1. Identify the problem
I feel tired and stressed out all the time.
2. Figure out the cause
I have too much to do: homework, clubs, and sports.
3. Decide on a goal
I want time to relax and just chill, but I still want to be involved in some activities.
4. Identify what resources you can use to reach your goal
Time management advice from my school counselor, advice from my parents, study groups.
5. Think of as many different solutions as you can
 - 1) *Quit all my clubs and teams?*
 - 2) *Stay involved in all activities and catch up with work on weekends?*
 - 3) *Cut one or two activities and stay involved in the rest?*
6. List the pros and cons of each solution
 - 1) *Pro: I won't be as busy, more time to relax and do homework.*
Con: I won't be involved in fun activities, I'll miss my friends, I'll be bored.
 - 2) *Pro: I won't have to drop any activities.*
Con: Doesn't allow me to relax or rest.
 - 3) *Pro: I'll have more free time but still can participate in my favorite activities.*
Con: I'll still have to give up a few activities.
7. Choose the best option
Option 3 will let me achieve my goal.
8. Reflect on the outcome
It worked! I'm still involved with the activities that are most important to me, but I have enough time for homework and relaxing, too. I miss the activities that I had to cut from my schedule a bit, but I'm going to pick them up again during the summer when I won't have to worry about homework.

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service

THE BASICS

HOW TO BE A GREAT SPEAKER

- Stop and think before you speak.
- Be direct, honest and polite.
- Speak clearly and not too fast. Make sure you use a neutral tone—keep anger and sarcasm out of your voice.
- Don't swear.
- Use "I messages" whenever possible. This means starting your sentences with "I" instead of "you." "You messages" blame others, often making problems worse, but "I messages" let you express your feelings without attacking. See the difference?

You message:

"You're always taking my stuff without asking! You're such a jerk!"

I message:

"I don't like it when you use my stuff without asking. It makes me upset when I can't find things when I need them."

HOW TO BE A GREAT LISTENER

- Don't interrupt the other person, even if you disagree with what he or she is saying.
- Focus on what the person is saying, not on what you'll say in reply.
- If you don't understand something, ask the speaker to explain politely. Instead of, "That doesn't make sense," say, "Can you run that by me again?"
- Once in a while, comment on what the speaker must have felt. Saying something like, "That must have been really scary," or "I bet you were mad" lets the speaker know you understand.
- Reflect back on what the speaker tells you by repeating it to her in your own words. This lets her know you're listening and gives her a chance to correct you if you've misunderstood. If your friend tells you about her parents getting divorced, reflecting might sound something like this:

"It's just so hard. My mom and my dad both want me to live with them, and I just can't choose between them."

"It sounds like you're feeling torn between your parents."

"Yes, exactly."

This fact sheet is continued on the next page.

TALKING TO YOUR PARENTS

Talking with a trusted adult is a great way to deal with all the changes of middle school, but it is not always easy. You may find yourself arguing with your parents more than you used to—their rules might not fit your growing feelings of independence, or maybe you feel embarrassed by things that never used to bother you. With these new challenges, it's especially important to communicate well with your parents and other adults. Try these tips:

- Spend time with your parents doing activities you all like. It will help strengthen your bond and build trust.
- When you disagree with your parents about something, stay calm. When you control your emotions, it proves that you are responsible and mature.
- If something is upsetting you and you'd like to talk to your parents about it, choose a time when your parents are in a good mood and not too busy. It will be easier for all of you to discuss the problem calmly when your parents are not stressed out, tired or in the middle of something.
- Think ahead. Plan out what you want to say ahead of time, and anticipate what your parents' reactions might be. If you're having a disagreement with your parents, think about some possible solutions before you talk to them about it. When they see you are willing to work through the problem, they will be more open to your views.
- Talk about the rules your parents set for you, like your curfew or rules about dating. Ask your parents to explain why they chose the rules, and then calmly tell them how you feel about them. Try to see things from their point of view.
- Follow the rules your parents set! You'll earn their trust, and they will be more likely to listen to your ideas about changing the rules if they know you'll respect them.
- Fight the urge to yell or insult them. It's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to hurt someone else out of anger.

Name: _____

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Name: _____

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