

Roberta G. Doering School Counseling Department

presents

H.E.L.P.

How to **E**njoy **L**iving

with a

Preadolescent

Welcome to Roberta G. Doering School



Fasten your seatbelts

The Times They Are a'Changing

- Biological / Physiological
 - Attitudes / Values
 - Relationships
 - Cognitive / Intellectual
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Differences



These kids are all fifth graders

Differences

- What most middle schoolers hate is being different from everyone else, yet that's what early adolescence deals out to them
 - Most of them are uncomfortable and dissatisfied with their looks
 - They are preoccupied with them
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How to Help

- Help them see they're at the beginning of growth and change
 - Try not to criticize or even remark on their looks
 - Don't try to dress them according to your tastes
 - Remember that it's their peers that are the most important judge of their appearance
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Forgetting



"You'll have to drive me to school, Mom — I forgot the school bus password."

Forgetting

- Preoccupied with
 - ❑ Am I liked ?
 - ❑ Am I tall enough ?
 - ❑ Will I look OK ?
 - ❑ Why does my wrist (head, foot, leg, neck, back) hurt ?
 - ❑ Is Grampa (Mom, Dad, Grandma) sick ?
 - ❑ Will terrorists hurt me or my family?
 - ❑ Why does my sister/brother get everything s/he wants ?
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Helping Kids Who Forget

- Creative reminders instead of nagging
 - Agendas / Schedules
 - Daily list (with a few things “to do”)
 - Walk-through planning
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Irritability

They are filled with energy

- Always moving or jiggling
 - Twirling things
 - Picking at things
 - Arm flapping
 - Foot tapping
 - Bouncing, tossing, strumming
 - Vocalizing
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Irritability

Child: “You don’t care, anyway!”

You: “Don’t you talk to me like that!”

Child: “Why? Don’t I have any rights around here?”

You: “NO. You don’t deserve any!”

Child: “That’s because you’re always picking on me!”

You: “Well, maybe I wouldn’t if you’d try to be a little more responsible once in a while!”

Child: “blah, blah, blah!”

You: “BLAH, BLAH, BLAH!”

Who’s the preadolescent???

Dealing with Irritability

- “Well we can’t discuss this right now”
 - “Let’s get back to this conversation later”
 - Be willing to listen
 - Don’t poke or pry
 - Avoid lecturing
 - Don’t bring in other issues
 - Keep comments (if you must) brief and non-threatening
 - Don’t let their moods rule yours
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Power Plays

Just when they're seeking more independence, they feel powerless

- Curfews
 - No money or means to earn it
 - Family/time commitments
 - Household tasks
 - Coming and going as they please
 - Dependent for transportation
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Power Plays

Middle schoolers often use power plays in an effort to grab some control over their lives and the lives of others

- Tantrums
 - Mouthing off
 - Manipulating parents, siblings, friends
 - Risk taking
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Power Plays

2 Year Old	Preadolescent
“Me do it myself”	“Leave me alone”
Fall to floor & scream	Slam doors & sulk
Bite & pinch	Ridicule & sarcasm
“Get into things”	Take risks
“NO!”	“SO?”

Dealing with Power Plays

- Think Ahead
 - Don't give in to manipulation
 - Disengage
 - Be willing to bend a little
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Friendships

- Expect to be left out
 - Encourage out of school activities
 - Help build self-esteem
 - Let them work out their differences
 - Don't take sides
 - Even friends get angry with each other
 - One problem doesn't ruin a relationship, but stubbornness might
 - They usually get back together on their own
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Chores

- Understanding the emotional ups and downs
 - Breaking down big chores into small parts
 - Setting up smaller goals
 - Understand the living in the “Now”
 - Be willing to listen
 - Deal only with the precise problem
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Worries

- Anxiety- As much as parents worry about preadolescents, don't forget that preadolescent minds are filled with worries and concerns about themselves
 - A Need To Belong- being "different" is more than just worrisome, it is sometimes a real burden.
 - Preadolescents feel as if the **WHOLE WORLD** is watching them
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Worries: What Can You Do?

- Be a safe haven
 - Listen to their worries, big and small
 - Offer calm, reasonable explanations for the worries
 - Capitalize on their broader concerns
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Denial

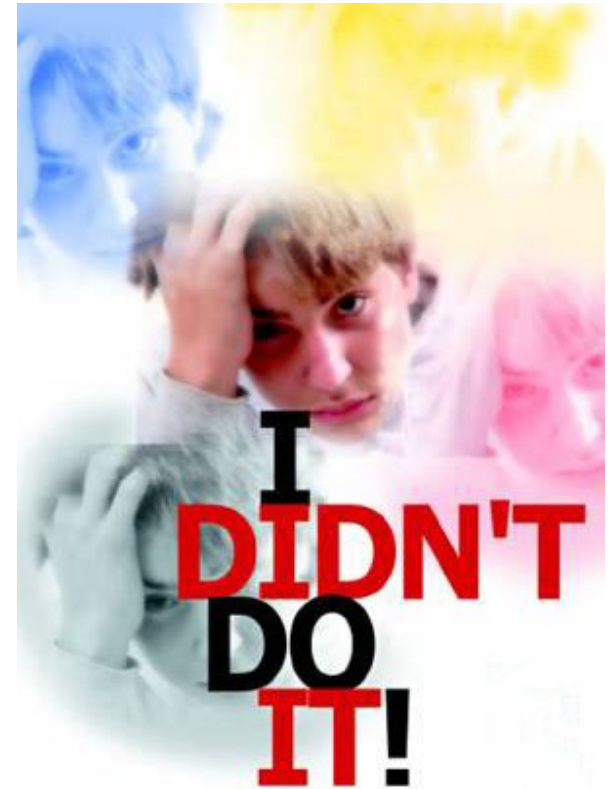
- They deny almost anything – Big or Small
 - Constant, spontaneous, unwarranted
 - Deny anything that puts them in bad light
 - They think adults are harsh, arbitrary, and lack understanding
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Why???

- To them growing up means freedom from being told what to do
 - They realize that they are very different from their parents
 - It buys them time to step back and take stock of the situation
 - It provides an important protection for a fragile ego (it usually doesn't last long)
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Try These Tactics

- Be careful of your tone of voice
- If it's minor, keep things light
- If it's major, start by listening
- Ignore trivial denials



Privacy



Privacy

- Most middle schoolers want to be left alone – at least by their parents
 - Being seen with a parent is considered a social mistake
 - In public, being with one's parents smacks of being a child
 - They need alone time to process all the changes that are happening to them
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Some Accommodations

**We know they're not ready
to be as independent as they wish**

- Allow some unstructured time
 - Sometimes use an indirect approach
 - Pick up information where you can
 - Remember that “Leave me alone” is not a command to be followed all the time
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Accepting Consequences

- Middle schoolers have a lot of trouble foreseeing and accepting consequences
 - Inexperience and lack of training
 - They live in the “Now”. They don’t think ahead.
 - Adults are not as available as in childhood
 - We see them as irresponsible and immature
 - They see us as arbitrary and unjust
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How We Can Help

- Help your middle schooler learn how to make decisions
 - Try to think ahead for your preadolescent
 - If they make a poor choice, be patient
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Blossoming Idealism

- Encourage your middle schooler to participate in service projects
 - School
 - Church
 - Community
 - Talk with them about their concerns
 - Don't laugh or pooh-pooh their enthusiasm
 - These are the ideals that will carry them into adulthood
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Joys

- There are opportunities for actual conversations rather than simple dialogues
 - Preadolescents have the ability to handle more complex social interactions
 - They can think and imagine and interrelate ideas that will astound you
 - They are maturing, and this in itself is a joy
 - The process is normal and natural so embrace it!
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ENJOY

- ***“Don’t take it personally”***
 - Continue to be a parent
 - Appreciate their strengths
 - Take time when it’s available
 - Talk with other parents
 - Keep in touch with the school
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