

Early Childhood Parents[®]

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Cleveland Metropolitan Schools
Family & Community Engagement

make the difference!



Outdoor play with friends boosts preschoolers' skills

As the weather turns towards spring, preschoolers will be able to spend more time playing outdoors. And that's great news for their brain and social development, as well as muscle growth.

According to experts, playing outside with friends encourages the pretend play that is so vital between the ages of three and five. Outdoor pretend play helps children learn:

- **Creativity.** Calling out, "Let's pretend we are riding horses!" is an example of thinking creatively. Then, when your child and friends collect sticks to "ride" and start galloping around the yard, they are playing creatively.
- **Problem solving.** What happens when there are four children but only three sticks? Kids often figure

out ways to cope. You may see them take turns with the sticks or look for another prop to use as a horse.

- **Social skills.** Children learn how to approach others and join in a group that is already playing. A child may use a startup cue, such as, "Giddy up ... I'm riding a horse, too." The kids already in the group learn how to accommodate and include others that decide to join them as they play.

It is always important to supervise as your child plays outside with friends. But give the children the freedom to be creative, interact socially and solve problems for themselves.

Source: V. Ulset and others, "Time spent outdoors during preschool: Links with children's cognitive and behavioral development," *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Elsevier Ltd. All.

Help your child develop a strong sense of humor



Kidding around teaches your child that humor can relieve frustration—and can even make

challenges fun! Studies have shown that having a good sense of humor also boosts children's health, optimism, self-esteem and resilience.

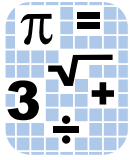
So, if your family gets stuck in the rain, don't complain. Instead, try a little humor. "This is like a shower! Too bad we don't have shampoo!" Then, pretend to wash your hair and laugh together.

To foster a sense of humor:

- **Read books together** that have amusing rhymes. Use silly voices while reading and giggle at the illustrations.
- **Make up silly songs** together.
- **Laugh at yourself** when you make a mistake.
- **Take turns** stringing funny words or sounds together.
- **Tell each other jokes.** Find age-appropriate jokes online or at the library.
- **Laugh** when your child tries to be funny. You are your child's most important audience!

Source: L. Frey, "A Child's Strong Sense of Humor is Nothing to Laugh at," Akron Children's Hospital.

Try counting games to build your preschooler's math skills



Playtime is the perfect opportunity for young children to build basic math skills. Preschool math lessons don't have to be formal—the best ones are just a fun, natural part of your child's day!

Try these simple counting activities together:

- **Count with stickers.** Label index cards with numbers and supply a sheet of small stickers. Ask your child to put three stickers on the card with number 3, and so on. As always, supervise your child when playing with small objects.
- **Make number trees.** Cut out trees from brown and green construction paper. Then, cut out some "apples"

from red construction paper.

Label the trunks of the trees with numbers and ask your child to put the correct number of apples in each tree.

- **Count with cars.** Label toy cars with numbers. Make garages out of small boxes and label those with the same numbers. Then, ask your child to put each car into the garage with the matching number.

"Too often we give our children answers to remember rather than problems to solve."

—Roger Lewin

Use everyday opportunities to teach your preschooler respect



Respect and kindness are key ingredients for a happy and successful student. Children who master these traits have smoother interactions with peers and tend to see better outcomes in school.

To teach respectful behavior:

- **Explain that the world** is full of unique people, each with their own thoughts, feelings and needs.
- **Model respect** in daily interactions. Your preschooler learns best by watching you.
- **Provide perspective.** It's important for children to understand they aren't the center of the universe. Other people's wants and needs matter, too.
- **Practice kindness.** Help your child recognize how others might be feeling. For example, you might say, "Jessie is sitting alone and frowning."

What is something supportive you could do as a friend?"

- **Role-play scenarios.** Help your child rehearse how to act before events. Practice how to behave appropriately at a birthday party, or how to politely ask a teacher a question.
- **Teach patience and waiting.** If your child interrupts a conversation, offer a firm but kind reminder: "Please wait. I'm on the phone now."
- **Practice sharing and taking turns,** whether it's during a game or in a conversation.
- **Rehearse how to say no.** Practice gentle ways your child can decline an invitation or request from a playmate.
- **Notice and praise good behavior.** When your child is considerate of others' feelings, point it out and offer sincere praise.

Are you helping your child handle activity shifts?



Transitioning from one activity to another is a regular part of school. However, many young children have a difficult time doing this smoothly.

Are you making it easier for your child to shift activities? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you give** your child notice before a change occurs? "In five minutes, we're going to leave."
2. **Do you tell** your child what will happen before and after events? "We'll get ready and go to the store. After that, we'll read a book."
3. **Do you offer** your child a role in transitions? "We're leaving now. Will you please shut the door?"
4. **Do you use** objects to help your child move from one activity to another? "Let's take this book home to show Daddy."
5. **Do you follow** goodbye rituals? "Wave to Grandma. Then we'll go."

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you are helping your child navigate changes smoothly. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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to Help Their Children.

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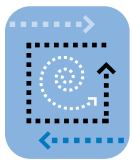
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Shadow play is a fun way to explore science with your child



Most preschoolers have fun making shadows—and have no idea that they are learning about measurement, time and space while they are doing it!

On a sunny day, take a piece of chalk to a sidewalk or driveway. Then, try a few of these ideas:

- **Draw an X on the pavement.** Have your child come back several times throughout the day and stand on the X. Each time, draw an outline of your child's shadow. How does it change? Ask your child to share observations.
- **Take a few objects**, such as a ball, a block and a crayon, and turn them in the sunlight. Discuss the shadow shapes that are formed as you turn the objects.

- **Have your child hold a crayon** and then crouch down. What does the crayon's shadow look like? Now, have your child stand on tippy toes and hold the crayon up high. What does the crayon's shadow look like now? Ask your child to tell you about the ways the shadow has changed.
- **Follow up your fun** by reading a few books about shadows:
 - » *My Shadow* by Robert Louis Stevenson.
 - » *The Dark, Dark Night* by M. Christina Butler.
 - » *What Makes a Shadow?* by Clyde Robert Bulla.
 - » *Goodnight Shadow* by Kimberly Muller.

Source: A. Koester, "Preschool Shadow Science," Association for Library Service to Children.

Help your child learn valuable lessons while creating art



When preschoolers create art, they get practicing making decisions, such as which colors to use

when creating a picture. They learn about cause and effect when they move a crayon on paper to make a mark. And they discover many new ways to express themselves.

To help your preschooler get the most from making art:

- **Ask questions** to help your child get started. If your child wants to draw a kitten, ask, "What shape is a kitten's head?" "What are the different parts of a kitten?"
- **Resist the urge** to tell your child what to create. The process of creating is more important than your child's final product.
- **Provide a variety of art supplies.** Look for things around the house—glue, fabric scraps, coffee filters, egg cartons, catalogs, paper towel tubes, string and yarn.
- **Be patient.** Some young children don't like to get their hands dirty or sticky, for example. That's OK. Introduce your child to new art materials slowly.
- **Ask questions about the artwork.** How did your child make it? How does your child feel about it?
- **Offer specific feedback.** Describe what you see. Talk about the colors and materials your child used. Note what you like most. Don't just say, "That's pretty."
- **Proudly display artwork.** Put it on the wall or refrigerator. Send it to relatives.

Questions & Answers

Q: My preschooler speaks well enough to communicate wants and needs. However, kindergarten begins next fall, and I'd like to help my child build language skills even further. What are some things I can do?

A: Strong language skills are directly connected to learning to read and write well. The more you talk with your child, the stronger your child's skills will become.

Here's what you can do:

- **Establish a time** every day when your child knows you are available to talk. Many families use a mealtime or the few minutes right before bed.
- **Ask your child** to pick something to talk about, and then discuss it together.
- **Encourage your preschooler** to ask questions. Give age-appropriate answers.
- **Talk to your child** about your day, and ask about your child's day.
- **Let your child finish** speaking. Ask some questions about what was said.
- **Talk about things** your family is going to do in the next few days, or things you'd like to do as a family.
- **Use new words** your child may not have heard before. Synonyms are useful here. Try saying *rapid* or *quick* instead of fast.
- **Provide clues** so your child can infer the meaning of new words. For example, "We haven't eaten in hours! I'm *famished*, aren't you? I think I can hear your stomach growling!" From this, your child can learn that *famished* means hungry.

The Kindergarten Experience

Take five steps to address clownish misbehavior



It's wonderful to have a good sense of humor. But it's no laughing matter when a student constantly disrupts

class with jokes and rude body sounds.

If your child is clowning around in school, take these steps:

- 1. Look for the cause** of the behavior. Sometimes children need attention or want to impress their classmates. Often, they try to use humor to cover up academic shortcomings.
- 2. Work with the teacher.** Together, try to identify when the problem behavior occurs and what might trigger it. Acting up after recess, for example, may mean that your child needs help settling down. The teacher might give your child a transition task like handing out worksheets.
- 3. Talk about it.** Your child might not understand when it's OK to be silly and when it's not. Explain that there are times when being funny and "clever" is actually being disrespectful.
- 4. Establish clear guidelines.** With the teacher's help, explain to your child what type of behavior you both expect.
- 5. Set consequences** that you and the teacher will enforce if your child breaks the rules.

By following these five steps, you and the teacher should be able to get your child's behavior back on track!

Source: K. Levine, *What to Do ... When Your Child Has Trouble at School*, Reader's Digest Books.

Teach your kindergartner how to win and lose gracefully

Many kids begin participating in organized sports in kindergarten. But whether or not your child plays a sport, learning sportsmanship pays off in the classroom.

To get the lesson across:

- **Focus on fun.** Young children should participate in games and sports to learn, have fun and get exercise. When they do this, they are winners, no matter what the score.
- **Practice good manners.** Even when adults focus on fun, kids are aware of who does "well" and who does not. Teach your child to say "good game" or "good job" to teammates and opponents—win or lose.
- **Let your child know** that it is OK to feel frustrated—but that it's never a reason to quit. "Sometimes you catch the ball, and sometimes you don't.



It's hard to feel good when you don't catch it, but don't give up! You will improve with practice."

Source: I. Kamber, "The Importance of Sports for Children," Novak Djokovic Foundation.

Preventing school absences fosters kindergarten success



Regular attendance helps create a positive school community for students and teachers.

And missing school too often can negatively affect academic success—even in kindergarten.

To keep your child from missing school:

- **Enforce routines.** Stick to a regular bedtime and wake-up time that gives your child plenty of sleep. Get ready for school the night before—selecting out outfits, packing lunches, etc.
- **Show pride** when your child gets ready for school on time. To

speed up a dawdling child, set a timer and issue a "beat the clock" challenge.

- **Avoid taking family vacations** while school is in session. Even if students complete schoolwork while absent, they still miss class discussions, group activities and other kinds of learning.
- **Schedule appointments** for after school and on weekends. These slots fill up quickly, so consider requesting them far in advance. When absences are unavoidable, remember to talk with the teacher to find out what you can do at home to help your child catch up.

Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas families can use to help children
prepare for school*

Cleveland Metropolitan Schools
Family & Community Engagement



THE
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March 2026

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Families Can Use to Help Children Prepare for School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

1. Visit a nearby park or running trail. Everyone run like the March wind!
2. Make a piece of art that stands up. Have your child draw a picture on paper. Roll the paper into a cylinder and tape the ends.
3. Choose several things with different scents, such as cinnamon, a flower and lotion. With eyes closed, can your child identify each scent?
4. With your child, make letters with your bodies. Can you spell your names?
5. Talk about things you are thankful for. List your child first!
6. Ask your child to arrange a collection of small objects into *equal* rows.
7. Go to the library and help your child check out books about spring.
8. Ask your child to supply sound effects when you read aloud. What does the train in the book sound like?
9. Turn a potted plant into a "letter tree." Hang new letters on the tree as your child learns them.
10. Eat dinner tonight by flashlight.
11. Think of special ways to send your child the message "I love you."
12. Have your child practice counting to five. If this is easy, have your preschooler count to 10 or 20.
13. Tell your child a story about when *you* were little.
14. Put together a kitchen band. How many kitchen objects can your child use to make music?
15. Declare today a Mixed-Up Meal Day. Eat dinner for breakfast and breakfast for dinner.
16. List four adjectives, such as *soft*, *small*, *heavy* and *round*. Can your child find items that match each of these descriptions?
17. With your child, count all the green vehicles you see today.
18. Create an art gallery. Make paper frames for your child's artwork. Rotate the work on display frequently.
19. Help your child make a card for a friend or relative.
20. Make your child laugh! Tell a joke, read a funny story or poem, sing a silly song or draw a cartoon.
21. Bake a cake together and allow your child to decorate it.
22. Get two rags and let your child help you dust.
23. Crush cereal in a bag. Write your child's name with glue on paper. Pour the cereal on it. When dry, let your preschooler feel each letter.
24. Make up new words to a song. You and your child might turn "If You're Happy and You Know It" into "If You're Silly and You Know It."
25. Look through a magazine or catalog. Ask your child to find different categories of things, such as blue things and things with wheels.
26. Do body arithmetic. Help your child figure out how much 10 fingers, 2 knees, 10 toes and 1 nose add up to.
27. Start a made-up story. "A dog went down the road and met a" Let your child finish the story.
28. Talk about something your child did that was responsible. Be specific, so your child will know what to do again the next time.
29. Open a fruit that has seeds inside. Explain to your child that fruit grows from seeds.
30. Combine two different shapes of uncooked pasta in a bowl. Get two containers, and ask your child to sort the pasta by shape.
31. Play a game of hide and seek with your child.

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Make use of seasonal weather to teach essential science skills

In many parts of the country, March brings changeable weather—which makes it a great time to enjoy weather-related activities that build school skills. With your child:

- **Keep a temperature graph.** Have your child record and graph the temperature each day for a month. Or, use an online weather report for your area. Also note whether the day was sunny, cloudy or rainy.
- **Measure the rain.** You'll need a plastic jar with straight sides and a flat bottom, a ruler and a marker. On the outside of the jar, use the ruler and marker to mark off each quarter inch. Have your child keep track of the amount of rainfall.
- **Create a cloud journal.** Spend a few minutes outside regularly

observing the clouds together. Have your child draw them, then research online to try and identify the type. Discuss how different types of clouds can predict different weather.

- **Make wind chimes.** You'll need four clean, empty cans, some string and a coat hanger. Make sure the edges of the cans are not sharp. Help your child punch a hole in the bottom of each can. Tie each can by a long string to the hanger. Each time the wind blows, the cans will make music!

To dive deeper, explore online resources together. A quick search on the Common Sense Media website will direct you to fun, age-appropriate weather apps, games and websites.

Help your child make a math strategy wheel



When students get stuck on a math problem, they often forget the simple steps that could get

them back on track. A problem-solving strategy wheel empowers your child to be an active problem solver instead of giving up.

To make a strategy wheel, work with your child to brainstorm actions students can take to find the answer to a tough math problem. Start with the basics and then add more specific ideas, such as:

- **Reread the problem carefully.**
- **Draw a diagram or picture.**
- **Restate the problem** in my own words.
- **Guess and check.**
- **Think about how I solved other problems** like this one.

Then, have your child create a visual chart—like a pie chart or a wheel—with each strategy listed in its own “slice.” Post the chart wherever your child works on math assignments.

The next time your elementary schooler is stuck, encourage your child to glance at the wheel, pick a strategy and give it a try.

Source: D. Ronis, *Brain-Compatible Mathematics*, Skyhorse Publishing.

A three-step plan can help your child be more responsible



Some students struggle with taking responsibility for their schoolwork. This problem can cause stress at home, but by working on it together, you can help your child learn how to be more responsible.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Involve your child** in identifying a solution. Start by asking, “You’re having trouble remembering assignments. What could you do that would help you keep track of everything for school? Why don’t you think about it, and we’ll discuss it at dinner.”
- 2. Let your child** try to make the plan work—without jumping in to help. If your child leaves a book or an

assignment at home, resist the urge to rush in and deliver it. Instead, let your child experience and learn from the consequences.

- 3. Suggest changes** to the plan if it’s not working, but let your child put them into action. You can offer an idea like, “How about we try placing a “launch box” by the door for school items? What do you think of that?”

“The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Encourage your elementary schooler to become a leader



Some students seem to be born leaders. They have the self-confidence, friendliness and helpfulness that make other people want to work with them.

But all children, whether they are born leaders or not, have the ability to become leaders. Here are some ways you can help your child develop leadership skills:

- Look at leaders in the news.** Whether you’re watching a story about a winning football team or a community effort to build a park, help your child see that someone was the leader of that group. Talk about the qualities that make people good leaders.
- Be a leader yourself.** When you take a leadership role—whether it’s at school, in business or in your community—tell your child about what you’re doing and why. “I’m volunteering to help your school raise money so they can purchase more classroom computers.”
- Teach your child to consider** other people’s points of view. Good leaders aren’t bossy. They make people want to work together.
- Find leadership opportunities.** Children can learn leadership skills in youth groups, clubs, Scouts, athletic teams and many other organizations. Family meetings are another way to develop “home-grown” leadership. Give your child a turn chairing the meetings and managing family projects.
- Don’t push.** Pressuring children beyond their abilities destroys self-esteem. If your child seems stressed or unhappy, lighten the load. Encourage small steps that will build confidence over time.

Are you helping your student read fluently?



Studies consistently show that students who read aloud with fluency are most likely to have a strong understanding of what they’ve read. Children read fluently if they read aloud smoothly, accurately and with expression.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your child develop this valuable reading skill. Do you:

- 1. Set aside time** for your child to read to you in addition to the time you spend reading aloud?
- 2. Let your child pick** what to read? Even if you think it’s too easy, your child can practice reading faster.
- 3. Read a passage** and then ask your child to read it to you?
- 4. Offer help** if your child asks how to pronounce a word, and then continue reading?
- 5. Discuss a book** after your child is finished reading?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you’re helping your child develop fluency. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Show your child how to become a more confident test-taker



Test anxiety is often rooted in self-doubt. When students don't think they will succeed on a test, they often don't.

To replace your child's worry with confidence, try these strategies:

- **Take off the pressure.** Tell your child that tests just show the teacher what students have learned so far, and what they need help with.
- **Find out what the test will cover.** Encourage your child to listen carefully and ask questions when the teacher talks about the test.
- **Create a study routine** to eliminate last-minute panic. Encourage your child to study several days before the test. Cramming the night before an exam rarely works.
- **Teach efficient studying.** Tell your child to focus on the not-yet-mastered material first.
- **Help connect new material** to information your child already knows. These connections improve students' recall ability.
- **Encourage positive self-talk.** When stuck during a test, your child can say, "I am prepared and I know this. I will remember the answer."
- **Talk about your child's strengths.** Confidence in one area can lead to success in other areas.
- **Visualize success.** Have your child draw a mental picture all of the test questions answered correctly.

Source: S.M. DeBroff, *The Mom Book Goes to School: Insider Tips to Ensure Your Child Thrives in Elementary and Middle School*, Free Press.

Research shows nutrition is linked to academic performance



Research shows that good nutrition has a positive effect on student performance.

Eating a healthy diet helps students stay on task and recall information. And eating breakfast regularly is linked to improved overall school performance.

To ensure your child is getting the right fuel for the school day:

- **Make breakfast a priority.** If your child gets breakfast at school, discuss the importance of eating it. If your child eats at home, keep low-sugar, unprocessed foods on hand. For rushed mornings, have healthy, grab-and-go options ready so your child can eat on the way out the door.
- **Be mindful of lunch choices.** Whether you pack a lunch or your child eats school lunch, discourage high-calorie and high-fat choices. Meals that are high in fat and sugar often lead to a post-meal energy crash, making it difficult for students to concentrate in the afternoon.
- **Plan for after-school hunger.** Kids are typically hungry when they get home, so prepare a variety of healthy snacks. Let your child choose from fresh fruits, veggies, cheese, yogurt and whole-grain crackers.
- **Control the options at home.** The simplest way to encourage healthy eating is to buy only the food you want your child to eat. Your child can't eat unhealthy food if it's not in the house!

Source: C. St John, M.P.H., R.D.N., "Proof Positive: Breakfast Improves Kids' Grades, Mood and Weight," Healthy Eating.Org.

Questions & Answers

Q: The principal called to tell me that my fifth grader shoved a child to the ground at school today. As a result, my child is going to be suspended for one day. I know this is the school's policy; however, my child says the other student started the fight by name-calling. Should I go to the school to complain?

A: Children don't always make the right choices. What's important is the lesson they learn after they've made a poor choice. Arguing with the school on your child's behalf now can teach the wrong lesson.

Instead:

- **Discuss the reasons** schools need rules. They are necessary to protect the safety and well-being of all students.
- **Ask about the incident.** Does your child admit to pushing the other child? It's important for your child to learn to tell the truth. Explain that pushing people is never OK—even if they are saying mean things.
- **Talk about other ways** your child could've reacted in that situation, such as by ignoring the child or saying *stop*.
- **Encourage your child** to tell the teacher if the name-calling continues. Reporting rather than fighting helps ensure the right child is in trouble.
- **Allow your child** to experience the consequences. On the day of the suspension, don't let your child spend the time on screens. Instead, expect your child to read, work on school assignments or write about this experience in a journal.

It Matters: Student Wellness

Boost your child's well-being with family meals



Eating together as a family supports children's overall wellness. Sharing a meal strengthens

relationships, which provides a sense of security and connection.

Here's how to get the most out of meals with your child:

- **Choose a time that works.** It doesn't always have to be dinner. If you work in the evening, have breakfast with your child or plan a weekend picnic or brunch.
- **Involve your child in planning** and preparing nutritious meals. Ask your child to choose the vegetable, toast bread for sandwiches or toss a salad. Having a say in what you eat and helping to get it on the table encourages healthy eating and teamwork.
- **Have pleasant conversations** on topics your child can enjoy. Mealtime is a great time to check in by asking about your child's day. Sharing something about your own day first may inspire your child to speak up.

You can spark conversations by asking a "question of the day." The question can be silly or serious. Go around the table and have each person answer.

Have family members take turns coming up with future questions.

- **Eliminate distractions.** Turn off the TV and put away those mobile devices. You'll be fully present and able to focus your attention on one another.

Source: "Increasing Family Meal Consumption to Boost Mental Health," The Food Industry Association.

Did you know that playtime is a proven stress reliever?

When children have fun, their brains release chemicals that cause happiness and reduce stress—which leads to improved mental health.

To get the most from playtime:

- **Encourage active play.** Your child needs at least one hour of daily exercise for physical and mental wellness. Active play (jumping rope, playing tag, etc.) counts toward that hour. Have your child keep a physical activity diary for a week—does it total at least seven hours?
- **Limit recreational screen use.** Hands-on, real-life play stimulates your child's brain better than passively staring at a screen. Together, make a list of screen-free playtime activities. When your child is bored, point to the list.



- **Play with your child.** Parent-child play strengthens bonds. Have a family board game night, act out a story together or ask to join in your child's pretend play.

Source: S. Wang, Ph.D. and S. Aamodt, Ph.D., "Play, Stress, and the Learning Brain," *Cerebrum*, National Library of Medicine.

Teach your child how to recognize and manage feelings



All children feel worried or upset sometimes. Identifying of these feelings and thoughts is the first step toward managing them in healthy ways.

Here's how:

- **Talk about upsetting thoughts.** When your child seems sad or anxious, ask, "What are you thinking about right now?" Your child might say, for example, "What if no one will sit with me in the cafeteria at lunch tomorrow?"
- **Show understanding.** Put your child's feelings into words. "I

know you're worried about finding someone to eat with at lunch tomorrow."

- **"Flip" thinking.** Tell your child to make negative thoughts do a "flip" so they're more positive or helpful. Your child might think, "I can ask my reading buddy to have lunch with me" or "I can tell my teacher I'm worried about sitting alone."

If your child often seems worried or upset, talk to the teacher, school counselor or pediatrician.

Source: "Catch, Check, and Change Your Thoughts," National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

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Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Families Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

1. Ask your child: "If you had a magic wand, what would you change about the world?"
2. Show how you make the best of a situation. For example, "This power outage is boring. Let's use a flashlight to write letters on the ceiling."
3. Ask your child how the sun helps us (*keeps us warm, helps plants make food*) and can harm us (*sunburn*).
4. Have your child read a news article and report on it at dinner.
5. Encourage your child to demonstrate how to solve a math problem using a method learned in school.
6. Ask your child, "What is the nicest thing a teacher has ever said to you or done for you?"
7. Make up a simple question. Challenge your child to answer with a sentence that rhymes.
8. Help your child collect small twigs and fabric scraps in a mesh bag. Hang it from a tree branch. See if birds take some to build a nest!
9. Encourage your child to sort books by subject using either the public library's system—or one your student creates.
10. Use a ruler to measure each other's heights. Have your child calculate the difference between the two measurements.
11. Start a small change collection in a jar. Brainstorm together about how to use the money when the jar is full.
12. Ask your child to list ideas for a new flavor of ice cream.
13. Build a house of cards with your child. Talk about strategies for making it more stable.
14. Fly a kite together if the weather allows. Or, have your child draw and decorate a picture of a kite.
15. Have your child use a sports announcer voice while reading aloud.
16. Make a crossword puzzle with your child to review vocabulary words.
17. Challenge your child to make up a song about the day at school.
18. Ask your child to reorganize your food cupboard. Discuss different categories the food could be sorted into.
19. Get moving with your child. Skip through the house instead of walking.
20. Trace the outline of a shoe onto paper. Ask your child to use markers or crayons to turn the tracing into a funny picture.
21. Have each member of your family make a "me" paper-bag puppet. Let the puppets act out a variety of situations that might happen.
22. Challenge your child to write an ad for a product your family uses.
23. Ask your child to read you the directions for a recipe.
24. When you watch TV with your child, get moving every time a commercial comes on. Jump up and down, run in place, do sit-ups.
25. Learn to fold some origami animals together.
26. Ask your child to draw a picture of something that brings happiness.
27. Record a video of your child acting out a science concept, like the Earth's motion or the life cycle of a butterfly.
28. Have your child check the weather. Plan an indoor or outdoor picnic.
29. Talk about tricky pairs of letters. Help your child distinguish between *w* and *m*, *n* and *u*, *b* and *d*, *i* and *l*.
30. Have your child point to a country on a world map. Together, figure out what time it is there.
31. Play a game of tic-tac-toe with your child.

Middle School Parents[®]

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Five steps can help your child master a challenging subject

Learning challenges in one class can make a middle schooler feel stuck everywhere. But here's the secret: Success breeds success. If your child is struggling with a subject, pivot and shine a light on an area where your child is doing well.

This simple strategy helps students stop seeing themselves as "bad at" one thing and start recognizing that their personal strengths can be applied to any challenging subject.

Follow this five-step plan:

1. **Ask your child**, "Which class are you most proud of your work in lately?" The key is to get your student to focus on current accomplishments and feel confident.
2. **Have your middle schooler** write down exactly why that class is going so well. What specific actions has your child taken? This list can be the

start of a plan for doing well in other classes.

3. **Add your own observations** to your child's list. For example, "You are a great listener," "You never give up easily," or "You always complete assignments on time."
4. **Brainstorm together** and make a plan. For example, "One of the reasons you have succeeded in math is that you always asked questions after class if there was something you didn't quite understand. What do you think might happen if you did the same in your science class?"
5. **Have update meetings.** Commit to meeting together once a week for a brief update. Ask for specific examples of a strength your child used that week. Talk about the results and discuss strategies for next week.

Encourage connections with classmates



The school year is moving fast, but even with just a few months left, it's not too late for your

middle schooler to make new friends and strengthen existing connections.

Forming friendships with kids at school can help your child feel more connected and engaged with the school environment. So right up until summer break, encourage your child to:

- **Say hello to new students** or any student who seems friendly.
- **Look for peers** with similar interests. Clubs and activities can be a haven for kids to make friends.
- **Ask questions.** Your child could start a conversation by asking, "What did you think of the assignment?" or "Did you watch the game last night?"
- **Develop friendships** that have potential. The strongest friendships involve spending time together outside school. If your child regularly sits with a few students at lunch, suggest inviting them over to your home or including them in a family weekend activity.

Discuss the benefits of honesty with your middle schooler



Honesty is a key ingredient for academic success. Why? Because true learning requires integrity.

Your middle schooler won't master algebra by simply copying a friend's answers. Your child won't become a skilled writer by having artificial intelligence ghostwrite a paper. Genuine understanding and growth come from your child's own effort.

Practice honesty with your child and share these benefits:

- **Honest people have self-respect.** They know what they stand for and they never have to worry about being caught in a lie.
- **Honest people are respected** by others. This respect can open doors. For instance, a teacher is likely to want to help a student

who tries hard and does honest work—even if it needs some improvement.

- **Honesty is the simplest path** forward. Telling the truth, even when it's hard, helps keep problems from spiraling and shifts the focus to finding real solutions.
- **Honesty leads to more freedom.** When you know you can trust your child, you are more likely to grant additional privileges. Teachers also tend to give more freedom to students they trust.

“Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.”

—Thomas Jefferson

Turn tests into powerful learning tools by taking these four steps



Your child probably knows that a test is a tool to see what students have learned. But does your child know tests are also a powerful way to learn?

Unless your child earns a perfect score, every test should be a learning experience. Educators agree that a proper review after a test is one of the most effective ways to boost future scores.

To get the most out of the next test, encourage your middle schooler to follow these steps:

1. **Jot down thoughts** about the test after taking it. What did your child struggle with? What did your child know best?
2. **Review and correct errors.** Your child should take notes on which

answers were right and which were wrong. Then it's time to correct every wrong answer and figure out why the initial answer was incorrect. If this is a struggle, have your child check with the teacher.

3. **Identify types of mistakes.** Mistakes generally come in three forms: carelessness, confusion and lack of preparation.
4. **Adjust study habits.** Based on the type of errors, your child needs to make a game plan for the next test. To reduce careless mistakes, your child could read each question twice, think about the question before answering and check work before turning in the test. For mistakes based on confusion or lack of preparation, the solution is asking for help and more studying.

Are you giving your child the right kind of attention?



Middle schoolers still need their family support and guidance, but in different ways than they used to. Answer *yes* or *no*

to the questions below to find out if you are connecting with your middle school student in age-appropriate ways:

1. **Do you make plans** to spend time together doing something your child is interested in?
2. **Do you take advantage** of times when you have your child's undivided attention to have conversations? Device-free time in the car is great for this.
3. **Do you allow** your child to invite friends to some family activities?
4. **Do you make** a strong effort to share at least one meal a day with your child?
5. **Do you keep** directions and explanations simple and to the point so your child doesn't tune you out?

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, then you are adapting to and meeting your child's changing needs. Mostly *no* answers? Check the quiz for suggestions.

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Start your child thinking about a possible career for the future



Families want their children to grow up and have satisfying work that suits their skills and interests. Middle school is the perfect time to start planting the seeds for future career success.

To help prepare your child:

- **Encourage your child** to explore interests through extracurricular activities.
- **Have your child** take assessments that can reveal strengths and possible career matches.
- **Talk with your child** about your own job experiences. Try to arrange a time your child can shadow you (or a friend) at work.
- **Model positive work habits**, including respect and responsibility.
- **Check out helpful resources.** Research the education requirements, skills needed and salaries of jobs of interest. The Occupational Outlook Handbook from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov/ooh/) is a great place to start.
- **Research educational options.** Look into different options—like technical schools and two- and four-year colleges. What credentials will your child need to reach a particular career goal?
- **Talk about money.** Calculate basic living expenses, including rent, food and clothes. Compare this amount to the average salaries of jobs that interest your elementary schooler.

A good night's sleep improves your child's ability to learn



One essential element in your child's education happens far outside the classroom. It's sleep, and it's vital for school

success. Unfortunately, research shows that 60% of middle school students do not get the recommended eight to 10 hours of sleep per night they need.

To determine whether your child is getting enough shut-eye, ask yourself:

- **Does my child fall asleep** within 30 minutes of going to bed?
- **Can my child wake up** fairly easily in the morning?
- **Is my child alert all day**—with no reports from school about an inability to focus in class?
- **Enforce a regular bedtime.** Don't let your child sleep in more than one hour past the normal wake time on the weekends.
- **Keep afternoon naps** under 40 minutes. Longer naps can make falling asleep at night more difficult.
- **Limit caffeine intake.** Watch for this stimulant in things like soda, iced tea and energy drinks.
- **Set a digital curfew** one hour before bedtime. Encourage your child to wind down by reading for pleasure.
- **Charge cell phones** and other digital devices out of your child's room overnight to deter late night texting and social media scrolling.

If you answered *yes* to each question, chances are your child is getting adequate sleep. But if you answered *no*, it's time to:

Consult a health provider if your child has ongoing problems falling asleep or is waking up multiple times at night.

Source: "Sleep in Middle and High School Students," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Questions & Answers

Q: My middle schooler has always been shy and it seems to be getting worse. My child is a strong student; however, in a group of peers, my child just freezes up. What can I do to help my child?

A: Shyness is often an unchangeable trait, so the way you guide your child through managing it can make all the difference. Instead of focusing on it as a weakness, highlight your child's unique strengths.

Your child may be a great listener or have insights into people. Emphasize these positive qualities.

At the same time, gently support your child in developing new skills that will make social life feel easier and more rewarding.

To help your child cope:

- **Offer reassurance.** Many shy kids think they're the only ones who struggle socially. Let your child know that shyness is extremely common and that many successful adults have had to learn how to deal with it.
- **Encourage your child** to share opinions and to be more vocal in family settings.
- **Have your child** practice looking people in the eye and smiling when they meet.
- **Help your child** prepare a question or two to ask when meeting someone new.
- **Find ways** for your child to work with others in small groups. Is there a service club at the school or community center? Could your child paint the sets for the school play? Learning to use and focus on strengths can help your child develop more confidence and grow up to be a capable young adult.

It Matters: Student Wellness

Keep an eye on your child's well-being



Half of middle schoolers say feeling depressed, stressed or anxious is their biggest hurdle when it comes to learning, according to one survey. While occasional sadness and stress are normal, it's important for families to be alert to potential problems.

Here's how to stay in the loop:

- **Do mental “temperature” checks.** Talk to your child regularly about school, friends and activities. Ask, “What was the best thing that happened to you today? The worst?” Find good times to chat, such as while doing chores, on a walk or at bedtime.
- **Be aware of influences** in your child's life. Get to know your child's friends and their families. Drive a carpool and listen to the kids. Set rules for social media use and other online activities.
- **Know the warning signs.** It can be difficult to tell if your middle schooler's bad mood is a normal part of growing up—or if there's a problem. Pay close attention to symptoms like:
 - » **Losing interest** in favorite activities.
 - » **Low energy.**
 - » **Avoiding family and friends.**
 - » **Changes in sleeping** or eating habits.

If you're at all uncertain about your middle schooler's mental well-being, talk with your child's teachers, school counselor and pediatrician.

Source: “Insights From the Student Experience: Emotional & Mental Health,” *YouthTruth Student Survey*.

Boost your child's self-image to improve mental health

For many children, self-esteem tends to plummet as the teen years approach. Kids with low self-esteem are more at risk of developing anxiety, depression and other mental health problems.

To improve your child's self-image:

- **Get your child's opinion.** What does your child think about that new law? What should your family do this weekend? Children feel valued when adults seek their input.
- **Focus on effort.** When you look over tests or report cards, start by commenting on what your child did well and acknowledging progress. “You worked really hard to bring up your math grade.”
- **Support interests.** You may have imagined raising a star athlete, but your child's passion is playing the



trumpet. Show support by asking what songs your child is learning and attending band concerts.

Source: “Ways to Build Your Teenager's Self-Esteem,” American Academy of Pediatrics.

Four ways to help your middle schooler strengthen resilience



Resilience is the ability to adapt well in difficult times. And it's a skill that can be learned.

To build resilience, encourage your child to:

1. **Build relationships.** Have your child join clubs, teams or other groups of peers with shared interests. Stay in touch with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Remind your child that teachers, coaches and the school counselor are there to support students.
2. **Stick with comforting routines.** Kids feel secure when they can rely on certain things being the same,

such as a nightly video chat with a best friend or a family breakfast every Saturday morning.

3. **Focus on positivity** by “editing” negative statements. For example, your child should change “I doubt I'll get a part” to “I'm going to practice every day until tryouts.”
4. **Help others.** Volunteering in the community, tutoring younger students or reading aloud to a younger sibling can give your child something to feel good about when times are tough.

Source: “Resilience for teens: 10 tips to build skills on bouncing back from rough times,” American Psychological Association.

Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas families can use to help students
do well in school*

Cleveland Metropolitan Schools
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March 2026

Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Families Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

1. Sometime today, exchange notes with your child instead of talking.
2. Tell your child a story about a positive way you resolved a conflict.
3. Encourage your child to make an audio or video recording of important ideas from a chapter or unit and play it back to study.
4. Ask your middle schooler to keep a TV/video log. Your child can record shows watched and personal opinions of them.
5. Comment on a positive quality that makes your child special.
6. Set an example for your child. Admit when you are wrong and apologize.
7. Call out words from a thesaurus at dinner. Take turns naming synonyms.
8. Remind your child that social media posts rarely give a complete, realistic picture of someone's life.
9. Tell your child a joke today.
10. Suggest that your child write about situations that cause strong emotions in a diary and list appropriate ways to handle them.
11. Ask your child to imagine life 150 years ago and 150 years in the future.
12. Have your child compare nutrition labels for different brands of a packaged food, such as cereal. Which has the most vitamins?
13. Give your child a say in a family decision: which movie to watch, what kind of pizza to order or which gift to buy.
14. Challenge your child to solve math problems with a personal slant, such as "How many hours old are you?"
15. Ask your child to teach you how to play a favorite game.
16. Today, talk to your child as you would to a friend or coworker. How does your child respond?
17. Discuss your family's values and how you expect your child's behavior to reflect those values.
18. By providing privacy, families demonstrate respect for children. Knock before entering your child's room.
19. Challenge family members to learn and use three new words a day. That's over 1,000 words a year!
20. If your child has strong opinions on an issue, suggest writing a letter to a public official or the editor of a news outlet.
21. Ask your child, "Do you prefer being alone or being with other people?"
22. Go outdoors together and throw a frisbee or jump rope.
23. Teach your child this three-step process for any job: *Plan, do, finish*.
24. Emphasize the importance of attending every class. Point out that attendance is also important in the working world.
25. Ask your child, "Do you think honesty is always the best policy? Why or why not?"
26. Help your child set priorities when studying. What is most important? Due first? Most difficult?
27. Save your next three grocery receipts. Then, ask your child to calculate the average amount you spent on food.
28. Ask your child to teach you something that was taught in math class recently.
29. Tell your child what life was like when you were in school.
30. Middle schoolers' moods can change frequently. Pick your battles, but make it clear that you won't tolerate disrespect.
31. Talk with your child about a mistake you once made. What did you learn from it?

High School Parents

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Physical activity can reduce stress & boost achievement

When students are overwhelmed, their academic performance suffers—no matter how much time they spend studying. One of the most effective ways to help your teen lower stress and perform better in school is to promote daily physical activity.

Exercise isn't just about fitness; it's a powerful brain booster that:

- **Enhances mood and energy.** Exercise releases endorphins that act as natural mood lifters and increase energy. Is your teen feeling stuck on a difficult assignment? A quick break for a walk or a few laps on a skateboard can refresh your student's ability to focus.
- **Builds confidence.** When teens feel like they have more control

over their bodies, it can make them feel more in control of their studies as well.

- **Provides a mental break.** Focusing on a sport or workout helps teens stop dwelling on their worries.
- **Improves memory.** Studies have shown that exercise stimulates the brain's ability to form and retain long-term memories.

If your high schooler says there is no time to exercise, talk about simple ways to fit some activity into the day. You could even plan to work out together—you could probably use the reduction in stress as much as your teenager!

Source: "Exercise and stress: Get moving to manage stress," Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.

This four-step process can end procrastination



At one time or another, most students put off completing their schoolwork. But

when procrastination becomes a habit, it can negatively affect school performance.

To break the procrastination habit, have your teen:

- **Select just one thing to do.** Sometimes kids put things off when they feel overwhelmed. Tell your teen to focus on one assignment at a time.
- **Set a timer for 30 minutes** and begin working on the assignment. While the timer is ticking, your teen should focus only on that task.
- **Avoid distractions.** Your teen should get water or a snack before starting the timer to avoid interrupting work flow.
- **Celebrate.** Once the timer goes off, encourage your teen to do something fun for a few minutes, such as kicking a ball around outside.

Your teen can repeat this process until schoolwork is complete!

Source: R. Emmett, *The Procrastinating Child: A Handbook for Adults to Help Children Stop Putting Things Off*, Walker & Company.

Be aware of warning signs your teen may drop out of school



The decision to drop out of high school is not typically caused by a specific event. Rather, it's a slow process that happens over time.

Recognizing the early warning signs is crucial to turn things around. Here are three key indicators to look out for:

- 1. Chronic absences.** Students who miss more than five days in a marking period often fall behind in their schoolwork. This leads to frustration, which can push them to give up entirely.
- 2. Lack of engagement.** Teens who consistently fail to turn in assignments, do not study for tests, or show minimal effort in class are mentally checking out. When this is coupled with behavior issues,

students often become isolated from classmates and teachers and may think dropping out is their only option.

- 3. Failing core subjects.** Students struggling in math, science, English, or social studies may face repeating the class or even a grade. Teens who are held back are at much higher risk of deciding to drop out.

If you notice these signs, reach out to your teen's counselor or teacher right away. Together, develop a plan to get your student back on track.

**“Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I remember.
Involve me and I learn.”**

—Benjamin Franklin

Studying a foreign language has many benefits for students



Many students consider foreign language courses only as something they are required to take to graduate from high school.

Help your teen see the many other benefits of learning to speak another language. Learning a foreign language:

- **Helps students improve skills** in their native language. For English-speaking students, learning a new language can sharpen vocabulary, grammar and writing skills.
- **Provides helpful practice** in speaking, listening and recalling information.
- **Prepares students** for the world outside of school. A new language exposes them to another culture and its traditions. Knowing another

language also opens the door to more career options.

To support your teen's efforts in a foreign language course:

- **Ask your teen to teach you** a few simple phrases. Use them around the house.
- **Stay aware of assignments.** Ask how your teen is doing in class at least once week.
- **Look for news and TV stories** about countries whose language your teen is studying.
- **Share videos, music and books** in that language that you find at the library or online.
- **Look for festivals and events** related to the language your high schooler is studying. Make plans to attend one together.

Are you helping your teen handle peer pressure?



Peer pressure is a fact of life. Sometimes its influence is positive—like when your teen decides to volunteer because

friends are. Other times, the influence can be negative, such as when a friend convinces your teen to skip a class.

Are you helping your teen resist negative peer pressure? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- 1. Do you help your teen take pride** in accomplishments? Self-confidence reduces the need to seek peer approval.
- 2. Do you encourage signing up** for classes and activities that match your teen's interests?
- 3. Do you remind your teen** about the importance of having self-respect and avoiding activities that may lessen it?
- 4. Do you reinforce the idea** that your teen is a strong individual?
- 5. Do you help your teen practice** different ways to say *no*?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're helping your teen resist negative peer pressure. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Encourage your teenager to make time for pleasure reading



High school students typically spend more time on schoolwork than they did when they were in middle school. With the increased workload, reading for enjoyment may be pretty far down on their list of priorities.

However, research shows that teens who spend some of their free time reading benefit academically and socially. Offer motivation by explaining that reading can help your teen:

- **Travel.** Few people can afford to travel every place they'd like to go. But your teen can travel through a book—and gain knowledge that may help your teen get there in person someday.

- **Become an expert.** Reading is the best way for your teen to learn about areas of interest.
- **Play detective.** A cold winter day is a perfect time for your teen to grab a cup of hot chocolate and dive into a great mystery.
- **Laugh.** Appreciating the humor in books helps teens develop thinking skills. It can also improve your teen's sense of humor.
- **Meet like-minded people.** In books that feature teenage characters, your teen is likely to encounter people that think in similar ways and face similar issues.

Source: R. Martin, "Reading For Pleasure," Right for Education Foundation.

Share practical ways to conquer common schoolwork challenges



When your high schooler is struggling with an assignment, quitting is not the answer. Instead, work with your teen to

remove the roadblocks that lead to frustration, missed deadlines and low grades.

Here are common schoolwork issues and easy ways to show support if your teen:

- **Doesn't do the work,** or turn it in. Make it clear that finishing assignments is a top priority. Then, share organizational strategies. Encourage your teen to create a daily "to-do" list to track tasks and deadlines.
- **Doesn't care about schoolwork.** Provide motivation by showing the real-world connections between what your teen is learning and future goals. Offer sincere praise as your teen makes progress. At

the same time, enforce a clear rule: Assignments must be completed before engaging in other activities.

- **Doesn't understand assignments** or directions. Suggest checking in with the teacher. Encourage your teen to review assignments before leaving class and ask for any necessary clarification right away.
- **Has too much work**—or not enough. Find out how your student is doing in the class. If your teen is doing fine, then the workload is probably appropriate. However, if schoolwork typically takes your student all night—or if there is only a small amount each day and your teen is struggling in the class—your teen should ask the teacher for advice.

Be patient and remember: Your supportive involvement today is the single greatest predictor of your teen's long-term success.

Questions & Answers

Q: My ninth grader is signing up for classes for next year. I want to discuss the course options, but my teen doesn't want me to be involved. Should I just let my teen pick courses independently?

A: Families and teens fight many battles over independence. Sometimes, teens need to win—but planning next year's academic schedule is not one of those times.

The choices students make now will affect their future. Everything from where they will go to college (or if they will go to college) to the careers they may pursue can be affected by the courses students take in high school.

While teens may be tempted to take only the classes required for high school graduation, make sure you and your student are aware of basic college admission requirements. For example, most colleges require high school graduates to have taken at least:

- **Four years of English.**
- **Three years of math.**
- **Three years of science.**
- **Two years of social studies/history.**
- **Two years of a single foreign language.**
- **One year of the arts.**

While many students may not be thinking about college, they still need to keep their eyes on the future. The classes your teen takes now can reduce or expand options after graduation.

Schedule a meeting with your teen and the school counselor. Together, lay out a plan for the next three years so there are lots of great choices for your teen's future.

It Matters: Student Wellness

Pay attention to your teen's behavior



It's normal for teens to be "moody" and to distance themselves from their families. So how can you tell when

your teen may be struggling? Here's what experts have to say:

- **Keep talking.** Regularly ask how your teen is doing, and make it clear you're always ready to listen. Talk about other adults your teen can turn to, like relatives, teachers, school counselors, coaches, etc. Feeling connected to family, school and the community can make your teen more likely to seek help if there's a problem.
- **Recognize symptoms.** Feelings of sadness or stress that persist and interfere with daily life may be signs of depression or anxiety. Other symptoms include avoiding favorite activities and changes in eating and sleeping habits. If you're worried about your teen, ask teachers what they've observed, and make an appointment with a doctor.
- **Learn suicide warning signs.** According to the CDC's 2023 *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, roughly one in five high school students seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. Warning signs include feelings of hopelessness, withdrawing from family and friends, giving away belongings and saying things like "There's no reason to live."

If you notice any of these signs, or if you suspect your child has suicidal thoughts, seek professional help right away.

Four strategies can improve your teen's overall wellness

Between the pressure to perform well in school and the desire to fit in with friends, stress is a common part of teen life.

To relieve it, encourage your high schooler to:

1. **Spend time in nature.** Explore nearby parks together. Suggest taking hikes, going stargazing or sitting outdoors to read or study.
2. **Engage in hobbies.** Help your teen find an activity that is relaxing and enjoyable. This could be arts and crafts, playing a musical instrument, gaming or other creative pursuit.
3. **Set priorities.** School, studying, work, sports, friends—does your teen cram too much into each day? If an overbooked schedule is the main source of stress, it's time to cut back on commitments.
4. **Get enough sleep.** Sleep is the foundation of good health and



stress management. Teens require 8 to 10 hours of sleep per night. Encourage your teen to limit screen use in the hour before bedtime and keep devices outside the bedroom at night.

Help your high schooler get control over digital device use



A majority of high schoolers report feeling they spend too much time on their mobile devices and feel pressured to respond instantly to notifications and messages. This excessive digital use can negatively impact learning, academic performance and mental health.

To manage device use responsibly, ask your teen to:

- **Spend one day tracking** how many times your teen picks up a

phone or other device and record the total time spent using it.

- **Reduce screen use the next day.** Brainstorm ways to accomplish this. Your teen could turn off notifications and check the phone only during specific times.
- **Adhere to technology-free times.** These are times when devices should be turned off or out of reach—during study time, family mealtime, bedtime, etc.

Source: J. Jiang, "How Teens and Parents Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions," Pew Research Center.

Daily Learning Planner

*Ideas families can use to help students
do well in school*

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Daily Learning Planner: Ideas Families Can Use to Help Students Do Well in School—Try a New Idea Every Day!

1. Talk with your teen about everyday strategies you use to save money—buying in bulk, using coupons, comparing prices at different stores, etc.
2. Encourage your teen to take responsibility for schoolwork. Give only one reminder about assignments that are due.
3. Ask your teen, “What do you think you will be like when you are 25 years old?”
4. Encourage your teen to review class notes every day. It’s easier to clarify and study them while the class material is fresh in mind.
5. Encourage your teen to visit the school’s career center.
6. The next time you’re upset with your teen, start a sentence with “I love you” and don’t say “but . . .”
7. Help your teen find opportunities to volunteer in your community.
8. Take a walk with your teen. Look for signs of spring.
9. Help your teen open up a checking account.
10. Talk together about the trusted adults your teen can go to for advice.
11. Show your teen that responsible people live up to commitments. Keep the promises you make to your teen.
12. Ask your teen: “What is one way you have become a stronger writer this year? What’s another writing skill you’d like to improve?”
13. Have your teen estimate how many bowls of cereal can be poured from one box. Keep track until the box is empty.
14. Help your teen brainstorm ways to make new friends at school—joining a club, saying hi to new people, discussing classes, etc.
15. Challenge your teen to give someone a compliment today.
16. Ask what your teen likes best about school life.
17. Encourage your teen to find your house on Google Earth. What places in the world are at the same latitude? Longitude?
18. Talk with your teen of the long-term benefits of school achievement.
19. If your teen is faced with a big decision, talk about it within the context of your family’s values.
20. Have everyone in the family spend 15 minutes cleaning up the house. Many hands make light work.
21. Explore the public library’s local history section with your teen.
22. At the market, choose a food that is new to your family. Ask your teen to help you prepare it.
23. Read a favorite children’s book with your teen. There are still lessons to be learned.
24. Invite your teen to run an errand with you. Use travel time to talk.
25. Have a discussion with your teen about ways each of you could improve your listening skills.
26. Ask your teen: “If you could trade lives with somebody you know, who would it be? Why?”
27. Challenge your teen to walk someplace instead of driving.
28. Encourage your teen to interview older relatives about their lives.
29. Does your teen dawdle while doing schoolwork? Suggest setting a timer to stay on track.
30. Have your teen search online for science experiments that can be done at home and pick one to try.
31. Today, mention something specific you appreciate about your teen.