



Enriching the Parent

Information and Support for Families of Children with Special Needs in Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, & Yancey Counties

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Growing Up, Acting Out by Barbra Solomon

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Avery Partnership for Children

Mitchell-Yancey Partnership for Children

Upcoming Events

**Check out page 2 for
Information on:**

**Support Groups in
Watauga, Wilkes &
Ashe**

Love and Logic classes

Dine and Discover

At my 10-year-old son's soccer game recently, one of the dads sat down beside me. "Ready for middle school?" he asked in a tone that made me think I had something to dread. When I seemed puzzled, he explained that that was when his son's behavior took a turn for the worse.

"I'm not really worried," I told him. "My David is such an easy kid."

He smiled knowingly. "So was Zach," he said.

Like me, many parents who've been enjoying their pleasant, cooperative third- and fourth-graders think that they have a few more years of smooth sailing before the challenges of raising teenagers set in. But experts say it's often during the middle-school years that kids begin acting out. As they straddle the fence between childhood and adolescence, they can become secretive, moody, and defiant. "Preteens are starting to assert their independence, and that can create tension between them and their parents," says John Davis, author of *Don't Take It Personally: A Parent's Guide to Surviving Adolescence*. So if you've got a child heading off to middle school this fall, brace yourself. Here's what's in store.

He'll Just Say No

You ask your son to clean up his room, and instead of assuring you that he'll get to it, he flat out refuses your request. "I don't feel like it," he says.

At this age, a child is struggling to be in charge of his own world and views his bedroom as a space over which he should

have complete control. He also may be testing boundaries by defying your requests. But while this may explain his defiance, it doesn't justify it. "You need to set clear rules about what you expect from your preteen—and to establish consequences if those rules are broken," says Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D., author of *The Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting*. Let your child have some input into what those rules and consequences should be. Involving him will make him feel his views are respected—and that goes a long way at this age. But don't hesitate to lay down the law if your child wants to do something that you feel is unsafe, unhealthy, or counter to your values.

She'll Want You to Butt Out

Your daughter spends all her free time talking with her friends, either on the phone or on Instant Messenger. And as soon as you walk into the room, she begins to whisper or closes up the window on her computer screen.

Connecting with friends is on top of the agenda as your child tries to establish an identity apart from her family. Privacy is also important as she struggles to carve out space of her own. There's no harm in allowing her to talk with her friends—if she's finished with her homework, chores, and other responsibilities. And unless you have a concrete reason to feel concerned, it's a good idea to give her some privacy for those conversations. When your daughter does want to talk to you about her social life, be a good listener. If she says, "My friend is mean to me," don't criticize her pals or tell her to find new friends. Instead, listen without making value judgments and offer suggestions on how she can cope.

Parent to Parent FSN-HC Presents: Pearls of Love and Logic

Special Thoughts on Raising Kids ©Love and Logic Press, Inc. www.loveandlogic.com 1-800-338-4065

Giving Control without Giving it Away

We often hear how wise it is to give our children a certain amount of freedom and control over their lives. However, children who have more control than they know how to handle often act out in unbelievable ways to show us that they need limits. It's almost as if they are saying, "How bad do I have to act before you will control me?" This confuses parent and child alike. The child, having become addicted to power, demands more power while at the same time asking for parental control.

Children who start out with too much power force us to tighten the limits, and that makes them angry. Who wouldn't be mad? When control is taken away, children feel they are being robbed of something that is rightfully theirs.

Dr. Sylvia B. Rimm, psychologist, educator, and author, explains that we all compare the amount of control we have in a relationship to the control we used to have, not to how much we think we should have.

Dr. Rimm says loving parents use what she calls the "V" of love. The sides of the "V" stand for firm limits within which the child may make decisions and live with the consequences. The bottom point of the "V" represents birth, while the open top of the "V" represents the time when the child will leave home. Toddlers decide about such things as chocolate or white milk. Ten-year-olds are deciding how to spend their allowances and the seventeen-year-olds make decisions about almost all

aspects of their lives. Unfortunately, the "V" is turned upside down in families where the child is treated almost like a miniature adult right from birth. These youngsters become tyrants. We've all seen them hold their parents hostage to temper tantrums and pouting.

Children need the opportunity to make choices, but these choices should be within firm limits appropriate for their age. This is easier said than done. However, it helps to keep the "V" in mind, always leaving bigger decisions for the next year. Make sure there is more control available to the child this year than last.

Teachers are good resources regarding age-appropriate decisions for children. And remember, some of the greatest experts on parenting may be in your carpool or community. However, it is wiser to get advice from parents who have well-adjusted children than those whose youngsters are driving them crazy.



Make Sure There Is More Control Available To Your Child This Year Than Last Year

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He'll Go Bonkers On You

When you tell your son it's time to turn off the TV, he storms off to his room, slamming the door and screaming, "I can't stand you."

Preteens are under a lot of stress. Physically, their bodies are starting to change, and that can be unsettling. They're facing an increasingly heavy workload at school, and they're trying to find their place on the all-important social ladder. When they're feeling overwhelmed, they'll often take it out on you. Still, you need to make it clear that you won't tolerate being treated with disrespect. "Say to your child, 'I want to hear what you have to say, but it's not okay to raise your voice,'" says Roni Cohen-Sandler, Ph.D., author of *Stressed-Out Girls: Helping Them Thrive in the Age of Pressure*.

Moebius Band - www.familyfun.com

1. **Make the Loop:** From a large sheet of paper, two feet long, or newspaper, cut a 2-inch-wide strip that's about 2 feet long. Bring together the ends of the strip to form a loop, but turn over one end before securely taping the ends together.

2. **Test It Out:** Cut the strip in half down the center, as shown. You might expect to get two separate loops, but what did you get instead? Want to see an even cooler trick? Cut down the center again.

3. **See for Yourself:** Make a new loop, just as you did before, then use a marker to draw a solid line along the center of it (where the dotted lines are shown, at left). Keep going until you return to your starting point. See? You didn't have to turn over the strip to mark "both sides."

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