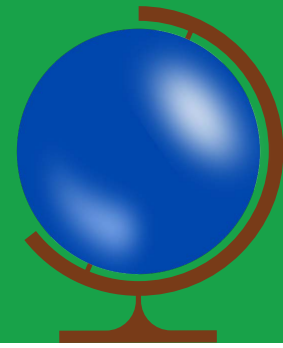


Welcome to Middle Childhood

(Gr. 4-5)

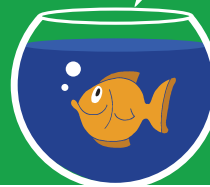
What's Happening Now? (Typical)

- Physical: new burst of growth in height & weight with approach of puberty, increased coordination
- Cognitive: increased attention span, enhanced capacity for abstract thinking, improvement in problem-solving skills, improved ability for self-expression through speaking & writing, increased focus on the future as capacity for hypothetical reasoning improves
- Social/Emotional: attachment begins to move away from family and increasingly toward peers with growing independence, sense of identity begins to emerge, increased need for social acceptance, possible anxiety around body changes and move from elementary to middle school



Help Children "Feel Good in their Own Skin" Appreciate & Value Differences

- Provide opportunities for your child to "try on" different things so they can discover who they are based on their own interests, skills, and abilities
- Praise effort and persistence, not just outcomes; practice a growth mindset; instead of "I can't do that", think in terms of "I can't do that YET..." and build a plan to get there
- "You must be so proud of yourself" vs. "I'm proud of you" — this small shift in language encourages self-reflection, builds not just self-confidence, but this important life skill as well
- Monitor your own attitudes and language; make a concerted effort to think about how you talk about yourself, your child, and others
- Validate your child's feelings but resist the temptation to "fix" negative emotions; remind your child that feelings and emotions are transient—we experience them, they don't define us
- Be an active and empathetic listener; tune in to your child



CONTENT BY



Food for Thought

Manage Stress & Anxiety Develop Resilience

- Acknowledge your child's feelings; let them know that feelings of stress, anxiety, or sadness are normal emotional responses, not something to be "fixed"
- Model strategies for relieving stress in positive pro-social ways: go for a walk outside, practice mindfulness, meditation, yoga, or deep breathing
- Make a household commitment to health: eat healthy, get enough sleep, physical activity, connection with nature, community with others
- Resist the temptation to numb feelings: examine your own relationship with food, substances & try to model the relationship you want your child to have
- Remind your child that feelings are transient; we experience them, but they don't define us

TO DO

Establish Expectations, Set Boundaries and Appropriate Consequences

- Children this age are more susceptible to peer pressure; talk early and often about making healthy choices, not just making choices to fit in, including choices about risky behaviors or substances
- Make a family contract or set of family rules "this is how we do it in our family"
- Model behaviors that you want to see
- Set loving limits and be consistent; this is a time when your child is starting to push boundaries to see which rules will be enforced
- Use discipline as an opportunity for learning and growth instead of punishment; consequences should be logical, appropriate, and connected to the action
- Establish guidelines and limits around technology and monitor your child's use and habits; use filters and parental controls when available

Balance the Need for Autonomy with the Need for Parental Supervision

- Provide appropriate opportunities for independence, but know where your child is and make sure a responsible adult is present or nearby
- Correlate autonomy with your child's ability to demonstrate she is ready for it; past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior
- Practice refusals skills with your child and develop an "exit plan" to help him get out of risky or uncomfortable situations
- Reinforce that your child's safety will always take priority over the desire for privacy
- As independence increases, make plans for how to touch base, when you expect her home, what to do if a plan changes

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