



AWAREness Tips: For Families of Middle School Students*

➤ **Sleep**

- Adolescents who get 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep every night have a reduced risk of experiencing depression, have better grades, have higher standardized test scores, and have an overall better quality of life (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014).

www.aap.org

➤ **Discipline**

- Relationships between parent and child can become stressful as adolescent children become more independent. It's normal to get angry or irritated sometimes, but try to avoid threatening punishments that you can't follow through with, such as "You're grounded for a year!" Decide on consequences that are fair, and then carry them out consistently (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015).

<https://casel.org>

➤ **Criticism**

- When your child makes mistakes, try to focus your conversation about what he or she did well before talking about what can be improved. "I noticed you got all of the multiplication questions on your math test right, you must have practiced your times tables! What do you think we can do to get those division problems worked out correctly?" Praising specific strengths helps maintain your child's self-esteem (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). <https://casel.org>

○ **Social/Emotional**

- Children can develop healthy social and emotional skills through an adult modeling or coaching how to recognize feelings (e.g., Are you feeling mad?). Identifying and discussing emotions with your child can help them have positive social relationships and deal with their emotions appropriately (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). <https://casel.org>
- You can help your children develop competence or the feeling of being able to handle a situation effectively by recognizing the successes of siblings individually. Avoid directly comparing your children to each other (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007). healthychildren.org/
- **Communicate regularly and openly with your child so they know that they are not alone.** Talk with your child about your own experiences and fears when you were an adolescent to help them understand that their anxieties are not uncommon (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007). <https://www.healthychildren.org/>



- **Substance Abuse/Safety**
 - 1 in 5 parents think what they say has little influence on their child's choice to use drugs or alcohol. Don't be discouraged, talking to your children about the dangers of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs significantly reduces the likelihood of adolescent substance abuse. Learn more about preventing substance abuse at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/Spot081-Parents/Spot081-Parents.pdf>

- **Academic/developmental Enrichment**
 - Reading skills are essential for your child's success in school and work. Modeling reading and reading together not only improves your child's ability to read but also influences if they will find enjoyment in reading as it shows you value it. Public libraries and school libraries are free sources of age-appropriate reading materials and are a safe and supportive environment to foster the development of reading. Learn more about developing your child's ability to read from <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/reading.htm>

- **After School Activity**
 - Consider enrolling your child in an organized after school activity. Students in these programs have higher standardized math test scores and less behavioral issues than students who spend after-school time without adult supervision (Institute of Education Sciences, 2009). ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/