

Discipline

Limits, Discipline Are Critical For Your Middle Schooler Perhaps the elementary school child who adored you suddenly thinks you're just not cool. Or you're busier at work now that your child is older and you're feeling guilty. You may be tempted to relax your discipline.

Don't do it. Middle schoolers don't just need limits. They crave them. When everything else seems to be changing, your child needs to know your parenting will be constant. As he grows, he will need to try more and do more. But he still needs you to step in well before things get out of hand. The worst thing you could do is act as his "buddy" instead of parent, giving him whatever he asks for just to keep the peace.

"Doesn't my child deserve more freedom now that he's in middle school?" you may be wondering. No. What he deserves is the chance to earn more freedom by taking on more responsibility for himself.

How? Well. Suppose he never misses curfew for six months. That may earn him the right to stay out later. Is your child doing a great job keeping track of school assignments? He may no longer need you to set a "homework time." Instead, you can trust him to do it and do it well, at a time he chooses.

Source: Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wingert, "The Truth About Tweens," Newsweek, Oct. 18, 1999,(Newsweek, Inc. 251. W57th St. New York, NY 10019-1894)