

Helping Boys & Girls Learn

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Parenting for Success in High School

National Get Organized Week!

Getting organized has a different meaning for parents of different-aged children. Helping children learn to be organized is actually working on your adult organization skills! While we sometimes fall into the trap of “it's just easier to do it myself” we have to keep in mind that we need to help children learn self-care skills at young ages so that they can be more independent as they grow.

Getting organized before entering middle school will really help both boys and girls be more successful, and teachers tell us the boys have the most trouble with the organization needed to help them succeed academically. One key indicator for teachers is whether students turn in their assigned homework on a regular basis.

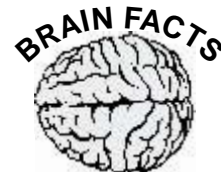
Developing good organizational skills on the home-front can help children transfer that learning to their school life, and your child's teacher can confirm how important organization is to academic success.

Remember that children learn best by your example, not your words! So check out your home to see if you are sending messages that organization is important. Are most things around the house in their assigned places? Are meals on a relatively regular schedule? Organization and routine are related--and having a routine children can count on will help promote organization.

It will be a lot easier for you to help your child learn good organizational skills in the first place rather than have to unlearn a lot of bad habits as they move through middle school into high school.

Something to think about!!

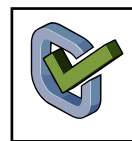
End each day with a positive thought about tomorrow. Something like “I know you're going to have a really good day at school tomorrow!” Don't focus on anything negative before ending the day--plant a positive seed. Negative thoughts release negative chemicals into your brain, and positive thoughts release positive chemicals! (re: Dr. Daniel Amen, MD)



The **corpus callosum** is a thick bundle of nerves that connects the right and left hemispheres of the brain together! In girls' brains, it tends to have more connections, meaning that there is often more “cross talk” between the right and left side of the brain for girls.

What does this mean? Girls are generally better able to multi-task than boys--they can do several things at the same time more easily. Boys tend to be more “task focused” meaning they prefer to do one thing at a time, focus on that thing, and complete it before moving on to the next thing.

There are changes in the body AND brain during adolescence that create chaos – both boys and girls experience changes that make multi-tasking more difficult – and this may accentuate the differences between boys and girls even more!



Check This Out

Resources for Parents

Book:

High Stakes High School: A Guide for the Perplexed Parent

by Allison Zmuda, Mary Tomaino, Jeanetta Miller

Written by three high school teachers, this book aims to help parents play a more meaningful role in their children's high school experience.

Adolescent Ages & Stages

A good site for teens and parents is:

<http://teenshealth.org/teen/>.

This site has information about health topics of interest to teens and their parents. Want to know about how caffeine affects the teen body and brain, why it's important for teens to eat breakfast, what to do about warts? This and lots more is discussed in a clear, teen friendly way. For instance:

Do your kids want to drink these "energy drinks." Check what the teen health site says about caffeine and the developing brain!



And a really important area for teens is how their body is developing and what to expect. There are sections on the teen health site for boys and for girls:



Your Changing Body

- * A Guy's Guide to Body Image
- * Adolescent Medicine Specialists
- * Delayed Puberty
- * Everything You Wanted to Know About Puberty
- * Female Reproductive System
- * Help! Is This My Body?
- * Male Reproductive System
- * When Will I Start Developing?
- * Why Are My Breasts Different Sizes?
- * Why Is My Voice Changing?



For parents, checking out this information can be really helpful when you need to discuss a sensitive topic with your teen and you aren't quite sure how to start the conversation. Visit the site and get some pointers!

Another age-related health issue for parents of adolescents:

A number of college presidents (and others) who are concerned about the amount of drinking taking place on campuses are advocating for a lowering of the drinking age from 21 to 18. Their argument is that kids are drinking anyway, and if it was legal it would take away some of the allure.

But consider this:



During adolescence there is tremendous growth of the brain--some research reports that the "gray matter" or the thinking matter in our brain can actually double in a year! As a result, there is significantly more risk to the person who begins using substances, including alcohol, while the brain is experiencing this growth spurt! Boys are most at-risk since they are more prone to risk-taking behavior.

People who do not start using alcohol until after age 21 are significantly less at risk for becoming addicted to alcohol than those who start drinking at younger ages.

Source: NIAAA and NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

This is important information for parents, and for teens. We need to educate our young people better about how to keep their brain healthy, since a healthy brain will be important for them to attain success both in school and in life.

Should we consider changing every law that people break, or should we find ways to educate and enforce laws designed to protect our children?

Lighting A Fire: Motivating Boys To Succeed

When he started school he was enthusiastic and looked forward to the wonderful adventures you told him were in store. In elementary school you started getting notes from his teacher indicating that he was "having some problems." The list included comments like:



- doesn't stay on task
- fails to turn in homework
- doesn't complete projects on time
- either can't seem to stop fidgeting and sit still or sleeps through class

In middle school your bright, gifted son was getting by with mediocre grades and an attitude that you found disheartening. He just didn't seem motivated to succeed in school the way you and his teachers know he could. Now he's in high school...

Being un-motivated can keep a child from being successful in school and can make home life a constant battleground. What can we do to keep our sons from going through this painful experience? Help them develop a love of learning long before they step into a classroom and educate schools about how boys learn best.

How Can You Help?

Make Time Trades

Your son needs to recognize that he will have to spend time doing things that he doesn't necessarily want to do. Create time trades with him to help him become accustomed to doing those undesirable activities. For every minute he dedicates to doing those things he needs to do (homework, chores, his own laundry) let him trade an equal amount of time doing something he wants to do from a list you develop together. You can limit some trades, such as television watching or video-game playing to certain blocks of time (no more than 30 minutes at one sitting) or bank time for a big trade like an overnight camp-out or trip to a theme park. Establish the rules of the trades together.

Make sure the list is made up of things he actually wants to do, as long as they are appropriate (even if they don't necessarily appeal to you). Remember motivating your son is about him and his interests. Both of you can be responsible for maintaining the time record, working on the details for the trade, and planning the activities. Besides encouraging self-confidence and self-discipline, more learning opportunities will open up to your son—math, geography, and more (but you don't have to tell him that).

Introduce Him to Male Role Models

Listen as your son learns what interests and excites him. Then find ways to let him meet men who are interesting and willing to share their stories, perhaps even provide some mentoring or an apprenticeship. If your son thinks cars are cool, find someone in your community who builds stock cars or restores vintage automobiles and arrange a visit. If your son loves rock music, find a local musician willing to let him attend a rehearsal or even a concert. These activities could become time trades.



Motivation is something we want our children to internalize. Helping your son learn to harness his physical energy to set and achieve his own goals is one of the best gifts you can provide. It will help him become a life-long learner, someone who is always looking just past the horizon to see what adventures might be waiting down the line.

(Source: Kathy Stevens, Duke Gifted Newsletter, Fall 2006)



Research rather consistently shows that girls are largely shortchanged in traditional math and science classrooms where boys tend to dominate discussion, receive more of their teachers' time and sometimes undermine the self-confidence of girls who enter those classes equal in achievement and attitude but leave with lower test scores and a perception that they aren't good at math or science.

Boys in math classes tend to fly through their problems, egging each other on to move faster, to do better. "I did it!" one boy will shout, and another will counter, "I did it before him!"

By contrast, girls will tend to slow down if someone doesn't understand triangulation or matrix logic, those who get it trying to explain it to those who did not.

Some research tends to suggest that having separate single-sex math classes allows both boys and girls to excel in an environment that is designed to teach in gender-friendly ways.

In a coed setting, teachers may be able to accomplish the goals by offering a variety of ways to complete assignments, single-sex groupings within the coed class, and recommending same-sex tutors for boys or girls who are struggling with a specific area.

Boys and girls can both be successful at math-- they just may take different paths on their journey to success.

MONSTER
 By Walter Dean Myers
 Steve Harmon, 16, is accused of serving as a lookout for a robbery of a Harlem drugstore. The owner was shot and killed, and now Steve is in prison awaiting trial for murder. From there, he tells about his case and his incarceration. Many elements of this story are familiar, but Myers keeps it fresh and alive by telling it from an unusual perspective. Steve, an amateur filmmaker, recounts his experiences in the form of a movie screenplay. His striking scene-by-scene narrative of how his life has dramatically changed is riveting. Interspersed within the script are diary entries in which the teen vividly describes the nightmarish conditions of his confinement. Myers expertly presents the many facets of his protagonist's character and readers will find themselves feeling both sympathy and repugnance for him. Steve searches deep within his soul to prove to himself that he is not the "monster" the prosecutor presented him as to the jury. Ultimately, he reconnects with his humanity and regains a moral awareness that he had lost.



RULES OF THE ROAD
 By Joan Bauer
 Jenna Boller is too tall for a sophomore and she's not much good in school. Her sister Faith got all the looks in the family, but boy, can Jenna sell shoes! She's supremely happy at her after-school job at Gladstone's, where the big white sign over the door says "We're Not Just Selling Shoes, We're Selling Quality." When elderly Mrs. Madeline Gladstone, the crusty president of the company, chooses Jenna as her driver on a business trip to visit other Gladstone's stores, Jenna goes reluctantly--with trepidation at driving the huge Cadillac, and at the prospect of leaving her alcoholic father behind. But on the road, Jenna learns "great road truths" such as "Never eat at a place called Mom's, because it's a safe bet Mom's been dead for years." She also proves to be indispensable (possessing an eagle eye for shoddy quality and sloppy service), and soon learns to admire and love the irascible Mrs. Gladstone as well as her old friend, "World's Best Shoe Salesman" Harry Bender. When Harry dies suddenly, Jenna realizes that she wishes he had been her father. Trouble looms in the form of a company takeover by Mrs. Gladstone's sleazy son, Elden, "Shoe Rodent," but Jenna summons courage from Harry's memory and saves the day for quality shoes.