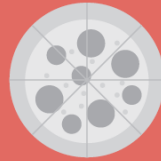


SEVENTH & EIGHTH



THE PHASE
WHEN



NOTHING YOU DO
IS COOL,

AND ONE
SMART KID



EVERYTHING IS FUN IN A CROWD,

WILL KEEP REMINDING YOU.

"YEAH . . . I KNOW."



YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER IS CHANGING...

PHYSICALLY

- Still needs 9-11 hours of sleep each night and may easily fatigue or develop headaches
- Girls outpace guys in development
- Guys experience changes in height and body shape and may develop body odor, body hair, and increase muscle mass
- Girls experience significant growth spurt, development of body odor, body hair, and breasts, and menstruation is likely (10-16 years)

MENTALLY

- Capable of self-evaluation and self-critique
- Able to see two sides of an argument
- Connects information to form an opinion
- Solves multi-step, complex problems
- Growing ability to organize

RELATIONALLY

- Often interested in pop culture, slang, current events, politics, or a global cause
- Wants to negotiate rules and test boundaries
- Displays an increasingly adult-like personality
- Needs non-parental adult influences
- Benefits from having a same-gender best friend

EMOTIONALLY

- Enjoys sarcasm and sophisticated jokes
- Often interested in leadership roles and teaching younger children
- May emphasize physical appearance and performance
- Tends to overschedule their time
- Benefits from talking about feelings

YOUR ROLE IS TO AFFIRM THEIR PERSONAL JOURNEY

Your seventh or eighth grader is in a season of personal discovery. Not everyone makes the team. Interests and abilities change. Long accepted values can come into question. But when you affirm their journey, you guide them to value their uniqueness, authenticate their beliefs, and discover greater potential.

THINKS LIKE AN ENGINEER

You help them learn when you...
CONNECT THE DOTS.

WANTS TO KNOW, "WHO AM I?"

You capture their heart when you...
HELP THEM DISCOVER THEIR UNIQUENESS.

IS MOTIVATED BY ACCEPTANCE

You coach their moral abilities when you...
AFFIRM THEIR VALUE.



IT'S JUST
A PHASE

SO DON'T
MISS IT

THIS PHASE WELCOMES A CROWD.

They walk the hall in pairs. They go to the mall in a herd. They build unfathomably large social media platforms. For most kids in this phase, the name of the game is to never be caught alone.

NOW YOU REALIZE JUST HOW EMBARRASSING YOU ARE.

Figuring out the new rules for your social behavior can be intimidating. When is it acceptable to "like" their Instagram post, and when are you allowed to openly comment? When do you dress sharp, and when are you supposed to just be casual? Don't be caught off guard this may be an awkward phase for you.

YOU MAY BE SURPRISED AT HOW SMART KIDS IN THIS PHASE REALLY ARE.

In fact, there may be no phase quite as smart as this one—just ask them. Being so much smarter than everyone else can really become a burden. Sometimes their patience just runs out, and they simply can't explain it to you one more time. The important thing will be what they know and how they begin to personalize it in this phase. So look for ways to encourage their process (just remember that it's their process and they know it).

When you AFFIRM your middle schooler's personal journey you help them...

**OWN THEIR OWN FAITH.
VALUE A FAITH COMMUNITY.**

Practically speaking, that means every week you have an opportunity to...

**PRIORITIZE A WEEKLY SMALL GROUP.
SHARE STORIES ABOUT YOUR FAITH.
PRAY FOR THEM.**

CHOOSE NOT TO BE SHOCKED BY HARD QUESTIONS.

YOU CAN HELP YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER...



You can do these things by taking advantage of the time you already spend together.

MORNING TIME

BE A COACH.

You instill purpose when you start the day with encouraging words

DRIVE TIME

BE A FRIEND.

You interpret life during informal conversation as you travel

MEAL TIME

BE A TEACHER.

You establish values with intentional conversation

BED TIME

BE AVAILABLE.

You strengthen your relationship by showing up when they need you.

IT'S JUST A
PHASE
SO DON'T MISS IT

PHASE

A TIMEFRAME

— IN A — **KID'S LIFE** **— WHEN YOU CAN —**

LEVERAGE

DISTINCTIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO INFLUENCE

THEIR FUTURE.

YOU HAVE 312 WEEKS AND COUNTING.