



Picatunny School News

Child, Youth & School Services

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Conversing with Tweens

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It is important to continue talking to your tween about important issues even though he is silent, distracted, and preoccupied with people and events outside the family. Just don't expect him to respond with words — at least, not right away.

Tweens often appear not to have heard, but they take in a lot unconsciously. They may respond a week or a month later as if you had just finished speaking a moment ago. In truth, it is hard to predict what your tween will hear and impossible to fathom how he will process what you say.

A common tween complaint is that parents or teachers yell at them too much. They are often very adamant on this point despite their inability to give examples. When pressed, they may bring up something hurtful that was said to them months or even years before, which you may not even remember. Even when your words and meaning don't register, your frustrated tone may get through loud and clear.

Avoid using an impatient tone to try to cut through the dazed state that is a hallmark of the tween years. By trying to force your child to listen and

pay attention, you may widen the very gap you are seeking to narrow. To facilitate communication, respond positively when your tween does speak by empathizing, sharing your own experiences, sympathizing, and simply listening.

The tendency of tweens not to share much makes it easy for parents to lose track of them in the shuffle of a busy family schedule, especially if more talkative, demanding siblings usurp the conversation. Set aside a few minutes each day to be alone with your tween. Spend the time talking a little and listening a lot.

Fact

While teenagers often accuse their parents of "not caring" because they failed to ask about their day or broach an important subject, most tweens prefer to bring up issues themselves. Whether they feel cared about depends on whether their audience is attentive and accepting or distracted and critical.

Doing vs. Talking

Tweens love to play duets with their mother on the piano and enjoy the chance to play a game of catch with Dad. If you aren't inclined to do these things, your child will be happy to have you listen

while he takes his piano lesson or have you cheer him from the sidelines during soccer games. But forget talking about it later. What is there to say besides "I'm starting a new song," "I scored a goal," "The piano teacher is mean," "Matthew pushed me." To tweens, it is the doing that matters. If you ask your tween about his day and he relates something funny that somebody did during recess but fails to mention that he got into trouble for fighting, that he needs to take cupcakes to school tomorrow, or that he was informed that he's failing math, he's not being deceitful or purposely concealing information.

Tweens, especially tween boys, don't much care to talk, but when they do, they share what is on their minds at the moment. Often tweens have nothing on their minds. Many parents have a hard time believing that, and their inability to get their child to open up makes them feel as if their child is pulling away or purposely being secretive.

Doing things together is a great way to connect with your tween. Shared activities help tweens feel close even if they don't share many words.



Easy Ways Your Family Can Help Kids Stay Safe

-Teach your children how and when to use 911, and make sure they have a trusted adult to call if they're scared or have an emergency.

-Check your children's online screen names to make sure they don't reveal too much about your children. At the same time, caution children not to post revealing information or inappropriate photos of themselves or their friends online. Make sure online predators don't have information they could use to manipulate your children into thinking they are trusted friends.

-Know what other access your children may have to the Internet—at school, at the library, or at friends' homes.

-Teach your children to ask you before leaving home and to stay with a friend whenever they're playing outside or walking anywhere.

-Make sure your children know how to reach you at work and on your cell phone.

-Set up "what if" situations and ask your children how they would respond. "What if someone asked you to help them find a lost puppy? What would you do?"

-Talk with older children about the importance of staying safe while driving.

-Teach younger children their full names, address, and telephone numbers. All children should also know their parents' full names.

Let's Make Music

There are many musical instruments you can make that will allow young children to explore sounds and rhythm and create their own music.

• **Horn or Kazoo**— Wrap a piece of waxed paper around one end of an empty toilet paper tube or paper towel tube cut in half. Secure it tightly and smoothly with a rubber band. Punch holes along one side of the tube with a screwdriver. Hum or sing a song into the open end of the tube.

• **Guitar**— Stretch several rubber bands of differ-

ent sizes lengthwise around the top of a shoebox. Tape a stick securely to one end of the box to act as the arm of the guitar. Strum or pluck the rubber bands. Because the rubber bands are different sizes and will be more or less taut, you can make different "notes."

• **Drum**— Remove the bottom and top of a coffee can. Stretch a balloon tautly over each end. Secure each balloon in place with rubber bands. Use pencils as drumsticks. Beat the balloon ends for one sound; beat the sides of the container for another.

• **Maraca**— Pour rice or dried beans inside a paper plate. Place another paper plate face down on top of it. Staple the plates together securely, leaving a small space to insert a ruler or stick to make a handle. Tape around the stick to make sure it's secure. Shake the maraca to the beat.

Let your child's imagination run wild decorating these instruments with markers, sequins, feathers, and craft paper. Or, have them improvise their own musical instruments with safe items from the kitchen or tool kit.

Practice Math Together at Home Each Day

You use math all day long, and eventually your child will, too.

Here are some ways you can help teach important math skills:

Use measurements. Talk about weight, height, temperature, and time: "Let's put 1 teaspoon of sugar in this tea" or "You're 3 feet tall!"

Practice grouping. Your

child might help you sort laundry by color. Or you might separate items into categories (clothes and towels).

Ask questions. Your child may be able to solve problems that involve small numbers: "I have one cookie, and you have one cookie. How many cookies does that make?"

Play games. You might ask

your child to figure out which type of fruit you bought the most of at the grocery store. Or ask her to sort the fruit by type.

Use numbers. Try to mention numbers in conversation at any chance. For example, "We need three potatoes. One, two, three."



What To Do When Your Teen Falls Behind in School

The end of the school year will be here soon, and you have just learned that your teen has fallen behind in one or more classes.

Here are some ways she might be able to catch up:

• **Know what's missing.** Your teen needs to know exactly what assignments she is missing. Ask her to write down the assignments

she thinks she's missing. Then have her go over the list with the teacher to ensure she has the complete list.

• **Set daily goals.** Now have your teen break the list down into a daily set of responsibilities. Some teens may need to divide the list into even smaller segments—perhaps things that can be done before school, after school and after dinner.

• **Stick to the schedule.** This is the most important step. Your teen needs to take the responsibility of doing everything on the list for that day. Otherwise, she won't be able to catch up.

• **Avoid a repeat.** Once the pressure is off, talk with your teen about how she could avoid the same problem. Don't nag—but do stress how the problem could have been avoided.

Look at What's Going on in the Schools

Dennis B. O'Brien Elementary

2/3– Talent Show Practice
 2/3– Team Colors Day
 2/8– Family Life Meeting
 2/9– PTA Meeting 7pm
 2/10– Talent Show Practice
 2/10– Food Drive Ends
 2/14– All Hearts Day– Wear Red
 2/17–Talent Show Practice
 2/20-21-Winter Recess– No School
 2/24– Talent Show

Copeland Middle School

2/3– Report Cards Mailed
 2/6– PTA Meeting 7pm
 2/7- 2nd Qtr After School Activities Ends
 2/14– Cap & Gown Measurements for Graduation
 2/14– 3rd Session of After School Activities Begins
 2/20-21–Winter Recess– No School

Morris Knolls High School

2/1–G&T Showcase Open Auditions
 2/3– Club/Activity Year-book Pictures
 2/8– Home and School Meeting 7pm
 2/8– College Panel Night 7pm
 2/11– SGA Winter Dance
 2/20-24– Winter Recess– No School



More Ways Your Family Can Help Kids Stay Safe

-Teach your children that if anyone tries to grab them, they should make a scene and make every effort to get away by kicking, screaming, and resisting. Set up role-play situations at home to practice.

-Over dinner, talk to your children about bullying. Kids are often reluctant to let adults know if they have concerns about bullying, but even those children who are bystanders to bullying incidents can be strongly affected.

-Remind your children about the household rules regarding having visitors over when you are not at home. Role-play with your children how to answer the phone when they are home alone.

-Explain to your children to stay away from pools and other bodies of water without adult supervision. All pools your children visit should have a visible life-guard on duty. If you have a pool at home, establish appropriate swimming hours and supervision.

-Take a trip to the neighborhood playground. While there, check to make sure all the equipment is well-maintained, and talk to your children about how to play safely.

-Talk with your teenagers about the importance of healthy dating relationships.



How to Praise Your Child

All young people want their parents' approval. This gives them confidence to face the world. It helps build a strong identity. It gives them courage to challenge themselves. They are healthier and are less likely to be involved in risky behaviors. They have higher self-esteem and are more successful in school and beyond.

- **Be excited about their successes - even the little ones.** Offer praise for a job done well. Focus on the

things done right.

- **Be specific about what you are praising them for.** It shows you were paying attention and that you really mean it.

- **Pay attention to what is important to them.** Show an interest and praise them about the things they care about - even if they aren't as meaningful to you.

- **Give your praise as soon as they earn it.** Don't wait until later, when it won't mean as much.

- **Give them plenty of opportunities to earn your praise.** Like everyone else, teens need to feel they are worthy of love and praise. They gain self-respect from learning new skills, helping others, and showing they can be responsible.

- **Do not praise them when they have not earned it.** Kids know phony praise when they hear it. They may be insulted by it. It may also make real praise feel less meaningful.

Ways to Clean Up Messy Homework

Evaluate your child's work. Check his assignments before he turns them in, and have him recopy anything that is illegible.

Understand the source. Is it only the math homework that's crowded with doodles and scribbles? Maybe your child doesn't grasp the concepts. Bone up on the



basics so you can help her, and talk to her teacher about her struggles.

Provide the proper tools. Often, messy homework assignments are a result of a lack of organization. Give your child the supplies he needs to stay organized and keep his homework neat.

Clean up her work environment. Create an orderly workspace, complete with well-organized files,

pens, pencils, and other supplies.

Allow for natural consequences. If helpful hints are still falling on deaf ears, let your child experience the consequence her teacher dishes out: a lower grade, redoing her work, etc.

Explain why. Spell out the association between messiness and grades. His teacher can't read homework if it's covered in scribbles, eraser marks, etc.



U.S. Army Child, Youth & School Services



Connecting Families, Schools & Communities

The School Liaison Officer works in conjunction with the Child and Youth Services Division and the local school community to address educational issues involving military children. Through partnering with the local and military community, the School Liaison Officer acts as a communication link between the installation and the surrounding school districts.

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College Preparation and High School Freshmen

Freshmen year is a rite of passage for most students. High school brings a time of new experiences and growth. This year is especially important for preparing for college. Specific tasks should be considered during the school year college admission.

Proper Course Completion for College Admission

Not only will failing classes at the high school level prohibit a student from graduation, but it will also decrease the opportunity to attend four year colleges once graduation occurs. Colleges want students who can demonstrate their ability to successfully complete high school curriculum. Students who have difficulty completing high school courses

will be less likely to perform well in college. Colleges want to see students complete classes in the core areas. Additionally, colleges want to see students complete classes at the student's ability level. This includes completing classes at honors and AP levels if appropriate.

Extracurricular Activities Participation for College Admission

Colleges consider participation in extracurricular activities for admission selection. Participation demonstrates positive character traits that make applicants attractive to admission counselors. Freshmen should review their high school's offerings and attend an informational meeting on the activities of interest. An appropriate goal

is to participate in three activities during the school year. Participation in activities allows students to work closely with coaches and advisors. Colleges often request a recommendation from a teacher, coach, or advisor for application purposes. Developing a positive relationship with a coach or advisor may lead to a positive recommendation for colleges.

Literacy Exposure

College entrance examinations usually take place during a student's junior year. Preparing for these tests begins in the ninth grade. Freshmen need to be reading books to increase their reading fluency and exposure to great authors. Additionally, many colleges require es-

says and some specifically ask about the student's exposure to literature.

School Counselor Relationship

One of the most crucial relationships that need to be developed is with the school counselor. Colleges require counselors to fill out secondary school reports on applicants. The forms request information such as grade point average, class rank, etc. In order to accurately assess the student, the counselor needs specific information. It is best to get to know the school counselor.

Overall, preparation is the key to college admission. Stumbling during your ninth grade year may jeopardize college options after high school.