

## 7 Characteristics of Middle Schoolers

Parenting middle schoolers is confusing and difficult. This phase of life is marked by dramatic change, physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Change isn't easy for anyone. Although each household is uniquely different, there are a few characteristics that are generally true. Check these following out.

### **1. They want to have fun and want to be taken seriously.**

You can't be boring, or they won't want to spend time with you. They don't want you to just allow them to have fun; they want you to have fun with them. At the same time, they want you to be real and genuine with them. They want to be taken seriously. They don't want surface answers. They want direct, real explanations. When they tell you something that seems silly to you but real to them, don't laugh. or dismiss it. Engage it with a matched level of seriousness to show them you care.

### **2. They are insecure about what is happening to their bodies.**

They feel like they are the only ones going through this thing called middle school. They feel like all eyes are always on them. Normalizing what's happening to and around them is helpful. Be sensitive to the fact that when you bring up what's happening to their body, they may get even more insecure at the fact that you are noticing. If you are trying to get your middle schooler to do something and they resist, there is probably a physical explanation for it. It's all normal, but it feels very isolating to them. Be careful when you push them.

### **3. What friends think matters more than anything else.**

This is difficult, because as puberty begins to change them from the inside out, middle schoolers are desperately trying to fit in. Peer approval seems more important to teenagers than advice from adults (especially their parents). The point is, teenagers in the middle school phase care more about what their peers say than anyone else. This isn't just your kid.

### **4. YouTube is Gucci.**

According to many research studies, 80%-95% of Generation Z seeks advice through YouTube channels and videos. The most searched videos are about real stories, day-in-the-life videos, behind-the-scenes videos, or how-to videos.

### **5. They act one way with you and the complete opposite with someone else.**

You get a call from their teacher, coach, or small group leader, and hear a story about how helpful they are around the classroom, or encouraging they are during group time. You instantly think, "Seriously? My kid?" It's confusing when they act different with different people. Why do they do that? It's not that they are being fake, they are just trying on different personalities to see what fits them best.

### **6. They push parents away.**

This is normal. Middle schoolers want freedom and are trying on different personalities. They aren't children anymore, and when they sense they're treated that way, they revolt. They push back on everything that is dictated to them. They want to make choices. They don't want to be told what to do and when to do it. There is always tension in living somewhere in the middle. It's so important for your middle schooler to have other adults you trust in their life. These adults stand in the gap between your teenager and you.

### **7. They exaggerate.**

When you find yourself wondering, "What happened to my kid? They didn't use to be this way," know you are not alone. This is middle school. The drama goes to another level. Something happens at the 8th grade dance, and your kid is huddled in a circle crying in the bathroom with her friends. Their teacher is obviously the most unfair person on the whole planet. It's a phase full of exaggeration and hyperbole

Parenting middle schoolers is no easy task. Understanding where they are and what's normal will help you stay sane as a parent. It's not just your kid, it's just the middle school phase of life. The Lord bless you and your family!