



The No-No List

If you find communicating with your middle schooler to be less than satisfying, check out what we like to call the “No-No List.”

1. *Interrupting.* Cutting them off before the end of their story. Or predicting how the story will end and finishing their sentences. Even worse: interrupting an emotional story with questions about chores or homework.

2. *Downplaying feelings.* Saying something like, “You think that’s a big deal? You should try living *my* life!” when middle schoolers are excited about something or really angry at someone.

3. *Yelling.* Considered “going off” by middle schoolers, it usually causes them to stop communicating. Note: To a middle schooler, yelling has less to do with volume and more to do with attitude and tone of voice.

4. *Using “always” and “never.”* Pointing out faults with language about how he *always* forgets to be responsible or how she *never* treats you with respect. As with most adults, the moment “always” or “never” is inserted into a discussion, the listener gets defensive and starts looking for ways to justify the behavior.

5. *Criticizing*. Complaining frequently about such things as clothes, hair length or style, and friends. Expressing disappointment in behavior, attitude, grades, etc.

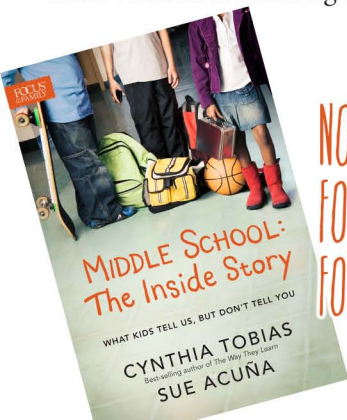
6. *Using half an ear*. Saying “Uh-huh” and “Hmm” to make it sound like you’re listening even though you’re not. Not making eye contact while the middle schooler is speaking (how many adults will allow their *kids* to get away with that?).

7. *Belittling in front of others*. Telling friends and family members about their children’s faults and mistakes when they’re standing right there. Or describing a situation that really embarrasses them, and then expecting them to laugh along.

8. *Being judgmental*. Asking “What were you thinking?” or “Why are you so . . . ?” or pointing out how immature your middle schooler is. Assuming it was his or her fault before getting all the facts straight. Or continuing to blame the middle schooler even if it wasn’t his or her fault: “You must’ve done *something* to make him act that way toward you.”

9. *Solving their problems*. Making them feel inferior by telling them what they should do. Interfering with the growth in self-confidence that comes with persevering through a problem on one’s own.

10. *Being sarcastic*. Using a tone of voice that makes you sound serious, but choosing words whose meaning is unclear: “Sure, buy anything you want; I’ve got plenty of money,” or “No, I’m *kidding*.” Being clever without considering the collateral damage.



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