

TEN TIPS FOR THE ELEMENTARY YEARS



- 1 Developing self-esteem:** The key ingredients to developing self-esteem are if your child feels loved unconditionally and personally competent. Give your child the opportunity to display responsibility and ability, and give your child the message that he is loved for who he is, not solely for his accomplishments.
- 2 The homework issue:** A dedicated workspace, free from distractions, and away from computers is often the best place for your child to do his or her homework. Understand your child's learning style so you can base homework routines on your child's natural strengths and inclinations. An intra-learner needs to do her homework in a distraction free environment, away from all the hustle and bustle of the house. Other learners thrive on dynamic interaction and might want to do their homework at the kitchen table. Some learners do best with physical movement, such as jumping on a trampoline while memorizing facts.
- 3 Sports are advisable:** Team sports teach children how to work with other teammates, experience success and tolerate failure. Sports have a direct correlation to increasing grade point average; sporting activities increase endorphins, which enable the child to concentrate better. When it comes to sports specialization, nine months of intensive practice and play is fine, but three months a year should be set aside for an alternate sport, using other joints and muscles, to avoid too much wear and tear in one place. Lastly, parents should communicate directly with coaches rather than yelling instructions from the sidelines.
- 4 Acknowledge puberty:** One of the most important teachable lessons about development and body change is that it happens to everyone at a different time. Emphasize that this is a long process over many, many years and encourage your child to respect his or her peers, whether they're early in the process, late in the process or right in the middle.
- 5 The emotional roller coaster:** When your elementary school-aged child yells, "You are not listening to me! You never listen!" this may have nothing to do with you. It may be that she was excluded at school that day, she is worried about an upcoming test, or there are some challenging family dynamics occurring. Meet her upset with compassion and empathy, even when she bursts out at you; eventually, she will see you as her ally. Help her to problem solve the real issues at hand.
- 6 Growing up too fast:** It is not uncommon for 3rd grade girls to want to wear sexy clothes and have boyfriends. You can transmit your family values if you have exploratory conversations with your child. These talks will help guide their decisions rather than taking their values from their friends at school, from the media or from popular culture. Talking openly with your child about your values works as preventative medicine.
- 7 The importance of real life social skills in the digital age:** Social skills are where we see children developing the necessary cognitive skills to be academically successful. Social skills strengthen executive functioning, focused attention, memory skills, planning and strategy, and are all strengthened in play and friendship.

TEN TIPS FOR THE ELEMENTARY YEARS CONTINUED

8 Bullying myths and facts: *Myth:* Bullying is a part of growing up, it builds character, and kids need to just work it out. *Fact:* There are serious short- and long-term consequences, both academically and socially, for the victims, the bullies, and the bystanders of bullying. When there is a concerted effort on the part of parents, school administrators, and community members to address bullying, we know that we can move bullying to pro-social behavior.

9 Basic Internet safety: The old-school rules apply to the digital domain: *Don't talk to strangers*- this has to do with accepting "Friends" online. The grandma rule- if your grandmother would be appalled to see a video, picture, or mean comment, don't post it. *Don't take candy from strangers*- don't give away personal information for the promise of a treat.

10 Understanding cyberbullying: Cyberbullying means sending mean, hurtful, electronic messages. It is repetitive, and it is malicious. It's pretending you are somebody that you are not. It's uploading pictures or videos in order to embarrass or harass somebody online. Teach your child how to stand up for the victim and make sure that the victim has somebody to turn to.

The following expert interviews contributed to this "Ten Tips for the Elementary Years": Cara Natterson, MD, Christine Carter, PhD, Dorothy Espelage, PhD, Geoff Wells, Laura Markham, PhD, Lee Hausner, PhD, Nathalie Kunin, M.Ed, Rebecca Eberlin, PhD, Theresa Payton, and Thomas Grogan, MD.