



# Middle Childhood

5-10 Years

## Assessing and Reinforcing Your Child's Self-Esteem



Consider the following questions about your child's self-esteem:

■ **What does your child think he does well?**

Identify and build on your child's perceived strengths and talents.

■ **How does your child respond to failure?**

Help your child view mistakes as chances to learn. Teach her that mistakes are accepted and expected. Help her realistically assess her performance while emphasizing her strengths. Discuss strategies that could lead to success.

■ **Does your child have close friends?**

If your child is struggling to make friends, help him develop social skills by arranging nonstressful play dates that are supervised and structured and that incorporate cooperative activities (e.g., going to the movies, making cookies, bowling).

■ **How does your child respond to new challenges?**

Help your child develop a sense that she can affect the outcome of events in her life. Words of encouragement are important and provide energizing motivation. Children feel more effective if they think they are making a contribution. Provide your child with opportunities to make choices, solve problems, and develop responsibility (e.g., helping care for younger siblings, helping prepare meals together, raking an elderly neighbor's leaves).

■ **How does your own style (e.g., personality, patience, energy level, talents) compare with your child's?**

Recognize any differences between your style and abilities and your child's. Take these differences into account when developing expectations for your child. Look for ways to support his unique personality.

■ **Are you setting reasonable or attainable expectations for your child?**

Unreasonable expectations can make your child feel like a failure even when she is consistently doing her best and performing at an appropriate level for her abilities. Even the expectation of "just do your best" can feel quite demanding, as few children or parents can consistently do "their best" all the time.

*Cite as:* Spratt E. 2002. Assessing and reinforcing your child's self-esteem. In Jellinek M, Patel BP, Froehle MC, eds., *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health—Volume II. Tool Kit*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.

## Six Rules for Making Responsible Decisions

“Dad, can I get my ear pierced like John?”

“Mom, can I go to Jane’s party Friday night?”

Testing rules is a part of growing up. If you have open lines of communication with your child, he may ask you permission for things to which you are opposed or for things you had not previously considered.



By discussing your child’s requests in a standard way each time, she can learn a good process for judging the appropriateness of choices. She will also be more likely to see that you are considering the requests carefully and not just saying “no” automatically.

In addition, such a discussion gives you a chance to think before reacting. It is ideal to have both parents discuss important decisions together with the child.

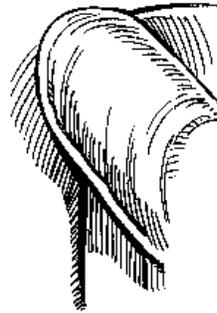
Posing the following six questions as part of the decision-making process can help you and your child arrive at responsible decisions:

- *Is it safe?*
- *Is it legal?*
- *Does it conflict with other responsibilities?*
- *Is it right for your child’s age?*  
*Will it help him learn and mature?*
- *Will it harm or inconvenience others?*
- *Could it harm your child’s self-confidence and happiness?*

## Tips for Parenting the Anxious Child

### Does your child:

- Worry or feel frightened excessively or without a good reason?
- Have many concerns about academic or social performance?
- Need an excessive amount of reassurance?
- Have physical complaints, such as headaches or stomachaches, when feeling stressed?
- Become embarrassed easily?
- Have difficulty relaxing in groups?



**At certain ages all children experience fears. Some children may have more difficulty with anxiety than others. The following suggestions may be useful in addressing your child's anxieties or fears:**

- Encourage and reward independent activities.
- Your child may experience physical symptoms when he is stressed; don't overreact to them.
- To help your young child conquer her own fear, ask her to teach a doll or a stuffed animal how to be more confident.
- Explain new situations in advance in a simple, friendly manner. Try role playing to prepare for upcoming situations.
- Help with bedtime fears by buying your child a new and specific stuffed animal, a "special companion," which can help him feel less scared at bedtime.
- Establish clear and regular morning and bedtime routines, and stick with them. Let your child use a night light, if it helps her feel less scared. Children feel more secure with a well-structured and predictable, but not overly rigid, daily routine.
- Assess whether television or video game violence may be contributing to your child's fears. Television and video game violence can make your child scared even if he wants to watch it and says that it does not bother him. For more information on television and video game violence and how it affects children, read Cantor J. 1998. *Mommy, I'm Scared: How TV and Movies Frighten Children and What We Can Do to Protect Them*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.
- Be aware that apparent daydreaming and concentration problems at school may be caused by your child's preoccupation with fears and anxiety.
- Ask a librarian to help you choose books to read to your child that address specific fear-some situations.
- Don't get involved in lengthy discussions about fears. Reassure your child that you are doing all you can to keep anything bad from happening. Role play upcoming situations that are likely to cause your child anxiety.
- Be open about and explain stresses on the family (e.g., a parent out of work, an

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impending move, a sibling experiencing serious problems) to your child in simple terms, and reassure her that the adults in the family will take care of things.

Children are sensitive to adult anxiety and may exaggerate situations that are not explained to them.

- Try to avoid extremes (e.g., being too rigid, too permissive, or overprotective).
- Be honest and objective about family problems that might make your child fearful. If the problems are too complex to address within the family (e.g., parental abuse of alcohol, abusive behavior, marital problems or parental illness [mental or physical]), seek counseling.
- Be aware that the object or situation your child identifies as the cause of her fears may be a substitute for something she is

hesitant to express (e.g., fear of “monsters” may really be fear of a person; fear of “the dark” may really be fear of the arguing she hears from another room). Consider whether there are “family secrets” your child may be afraid of or not allowed to discuss openly. Seek counseling if you find it too difficult to communicate with your child about her fears.

- Suggest that your child write a story or draw a picture of scary things, and look for clues to help you understand his fears better. An older child might write a letter or keep a journal.
- Preoccupation with death or dying or other morbid subjects may be a sign of depression. If your child is overly concerned with these things, have him evaluated by a health professional.

## Reading for Children, Grades 1–6

The following stories are fun to read and can also help children deal with specific issues.

<p><b>SELF</b></p> <p>Depression/Sadness</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Impulsivity</p>	<p><b>Primary Grades (1–3)</b></p> <p><i>The Tub People</i></p> <p><i>The Ugly Duckling</i></p> <p><i>Leo the Late Bloomer</i></p> <p><i>Caps for Sale</i></p> <p><i>Ferdinand</i></p> <p><i>Frog and Toad (Lost Button)</i></p> <p><i>Goldilocks</i></p> <p><i>Amelia Bedelia</i></p> <p><i>Tigger</i></p> <p><i>Gingerbread Boy</i></p> <p><i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i></p> <p><i>Sylvester and the Magic Pebble</i></p>	<p><b>Intermediate Grades (4–6)</b></p> <p><i>Call It Courage</i></p> <p><i>The Chalk Box Kid</i></p> <p><i>Dear Mr. Henshaw</i></p> <p><i>The War with Grandpa</i></p> <p><i>Castle in the Attic</i></p> <p><i>Demeter (Greek Mythology)</i></p> <p><i>Casey at the Bat</i></p> <p><i>Farmer Boy</i></p> <p><i>Island of the Blue Dolphin</i></p> <p><i>Castle in the Attic</i></p> <p><i>Johnny Tremain</i></p> <p><i>Farmer Boy</i></p>
<p><b>FAMILY: WHAT MATTERS AT HOME?</b></p> <p>Breaking Rules</p>	<p><b>Primary Grades (1–3)</b></p> <p><i>Goldilocks</i></p> <p><i>The Emperor’s New Clothes</i></p> <p><i>Peter Rabbit</i></p>	<p><b>Intermediate Grades (4–6)</b></p> <p><i>The Whipping Boy</i></p> <p><i>I Want to Go Home</i></p> <p><i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i></p>
<p><b>FRIENDSHIPS</b></p>	<p><b>Primary Grades (1–3)</b></p> <p><i>Frog and Toad—Series</i></p> <p><i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i></p> <p><i>If You Give a Moose a Muffin</i></p> <p><i>How My Parents Learned to Eat</i></p> <p><i>Amos and Boris</i></p> <p><i>Ira Sleeps Over</i></p> <p><i>Amelia Bedelia</i></p> <p><i>Winnie the Pooh</i></p>	<p><b>Intermediate Grades (4–6)</b></p> <p><i>Chalk Box Kid</i></p> <p><i>The War with Grandpa</i></p> <p><i>The Secret Garden</i></p> <p><i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i></p> <p><i>Number the Stars</i></p> <p><i>My Side of the Mountain</i></p> <p><i>The Night of the Twisters</i></p> <p><i>Bunnicula</i></p>

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<p><b>FRIENDSHIPS</b></p>	<p><b>Primary Grades (1–3)</b>  <i>Charlotte’s Web</i>  <i>A Bargain for Frances</i>  <i>The Ugly Duckling</i>  <i>Amazing Grace</i>  <i>Doorbell Rang</i>  <i>Bunnica</i>  <i>The Black Snowman</i>  <i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i></p>	<p><b>Intermediate Grades (4–6)</b>  <i>Bronze Bow</i>  <i>Sarah Plain and Tall</i>  <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i>  <i>100 Dresses</i>  <i>G. W. Carver</i>  <i>Sign of the Beaver</i>  <i>Let the Circle Be Unbroken</i>  <i>Charlotte’s Web</i></p>
<p><b>COMMUNITY</b></p> <p>Care of Animals</p>	<p><b>Primary Grades (1–3)</b>  <i>Black Beauty</i>  <i>Horton Hatches an Egg</i></p>	<p><b>Intermediate Grades (4–6)</b>  <i>The Enormous Egg</i>  <i>The Trouble with Tuck</i>  <i>Where the Red Fern Grows</i>  <i>Summer of the Monkeys</i></p>



Source: Adapted, with permission, from Buchanan B, Yarnevich A. 1997. *When Being a Good Parent or Teacher Is Not Enough: Vol. I*. Kansas City, MO: Health Education Consultants. Web site: [www.aboutkidsmentalhealth.com](http://www.aboutkidsmentalhealth.com).

## About My Feelings

This is a sheet you can fill out and share with your parents and/or health professional. Your answers will help them learn more about you and how you respond to different situations.

Things that make me *angry*:

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When I am *angry*, I . . .

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Things that make me *happy*:

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When I am *happy*, I . . .

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Things that make me *sad*:

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When I am *sad*, I . . .

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About My Feelings (continued)

When I am *picked on*, I . . .

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Things that make me feel *hurt*:

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When I am *afraid*, I . . .

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When I *care about* people, I . . .

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Things that make me *proud* of myself:

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My name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Buchanan B, Yarnevich A. 1994. *What to Do When Kids Say "NO!"* Kansas City, MO: Health Education Consultants. Web site: [www.aboutkidsmentalhealth.org](http://www.aboutkidsmentalhealth.org).

## How to Handle Anger

**W**henever our body signals and behavior let us know we are feeling angry, we need to find a way to be angry without fighting or being mean to other people. What can we do?

When you notice you are getting angry, you might try one of the following:

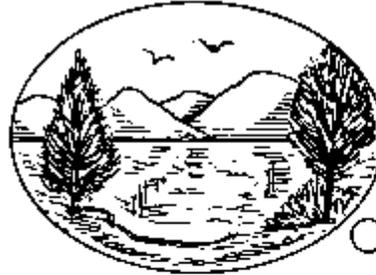
- Say to yourself,

*“I am starting to feel angry and I need to go to a place where I can calm down.”*

Tell an adult that you are feeling angry and need a place to calm down. Think of a place ahead of time where you can go if you need to be by yourself. Arrange ahead of time to talk with a trusted friend or adult when you start to feel angry. Stay in this place or with this person until you feel you are in control and calm again.

- Do an activity that helps you relax and that gets the anger out in a safe way, such as throwing a ball or running in the gym. Continue doing this activity until you feel you are in control and calm again.
- Try some of the following actions you can do any time or in any place when you feel angry:
  - Take some deep breaths
  - Count to 10
  - Rub your feet on the floor
  - Think of a “calm” picture

Check in with your parent or another adult when you are feeling less angry, and let them know what it was that made you angry.



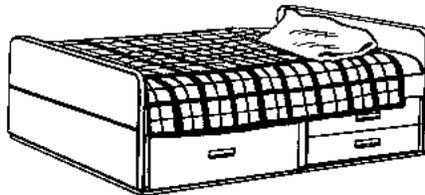
Source: Adapted, with permission, from Buchanan B, Yarnevich A. 1994. *What to Do When Kids Say “NO!”* Kansas City, MO: Health Education Consultants. Web site: [www.aboutkidsmentalhealth.org](http://www.aboutkidsmentalhealth.org).

## Bed-Wetting (Enuresis)

**M**edical problems such as recurrent urinary tract infections, abnormalities of the urinary tract, or diabetes can in some instances cause or contribute to bed-wetting. Your primary care health professional will evaluate your child for the possibility of medical causes of bed-wetting. However, medical causes of bed-wetting are uncommon.

If your child has difficulty with enuresis and does not have underlying medical concerns, reassure him that bed-wetting will pass with age. Punishment or pressure can delay a cure and cause secondary emotional problems. The following suggestions may help.

- Encourage your child to drink fluids in the morning and early afternoon. The more fluids your child drinks, the more urine she will produce, which will eventually increase her bladder capacity.



- Discourage drinking fluids in the evening following dinner. Limiting your child's fluid intake to 2 oz or less in the 2 hours before bedtime will decrease the amount of urine he produces at night. Offer gentle reminders about excessive fluid intake, but don't worry about a few extra swallows of water.
- Teach your child bladder-stretching exercises. Some children have a small bladder capacity, and such exercises may be helpful. Have your child practice holding her urine as long as possible during the day, when she has easy access to a toilet. When she feels the urge to urinate, encourage her to wait an additional few minutes.
- Protect the bed from urine. Children over 4 years of age should not wear diapers and plastic pants, but they can wear extra-thick underwear to bed in addition to pajamas or can sleep on a waterproof pad to keep sheets dry. Placing a plastic mattress cover on the mattress will keep urine from soaking through.

- Encourage your child to get up to urinate at night. Children with small bladders may need to urinate one or more times at night to stay dry. Coach your child to get up to go to the bathroom

as soon as he feels the urge to urinate at night, instead of trying to hold his urine until morning. Initially, your child may find it useful to set an alarm clock to wake him up 3 to 4 hours after bedtime.

- Develop a routine that is not embarrassing for your child in handling wet clothes and sheets. Keep clean pajamas and towels on a chair near your child's bed to make it easier for him to change out of wet clothes at night. Have your child shower regularly in the morning to ensure that he does not smell of urine during the day. Agree on a plan for how your child will take care of wet items (e.g., rinsing them out, putting them in the washing machine or another designated place) to decrease morning frustrations.
- Respond positively to dry nights and gently to wet nights. In addition to praising your child for dry nights, compliment her for any efforts made to go to the bathroom at night, even if she is wet in the morning. Do not allow siblings to tease your child.

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## Bed-Wetting (Enuresis) (continued)

- Place a night light in your child's bedroom, in the hallway, and in the bathroom, so that your child is not afraid to go to the bathroom at night. Make sure your child understands that it is all right to get out of bed to go to the bathroom, even if he isn't supposed to get up during the night otherwise.
- Consider using a bed-wetting alarm device. If your child is 7 years old or older and is still having difficulty waking up to go to the bathroom at night, a small bed-wetting alarm that buzzes when it senses a few drops of urine may be useful in helping your child wake up at night.

- There are medications available that may temporarily help your child stay dry at night. If you would like to learn more about the possible risks and benefits of these medications, consult your primary care health professional.

### RESOURCES

- Schmitt BD. 1999. *Instructions for Pediatric Patients* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: W. B. Saunders.
- Schor EL, ed. 1995. *The American Academy of Pediatrics: Caring for Your School-Age Child: Ages 5 to 12*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Schmitt BD. 1999. *Instructions for Pediatric Patients* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: W. B. Saunders.

## Family Meetings



Your family can use family meetings to communicate and solve problems. Your children can be meaningfully included as early as the preschool years. These meetings will teach your child to respect you and will give you an opportunity to demonstrate respect for your child. Family meetings also ensure that you will have an opportunity to instruct your child about your expectations. Family meetings are a highly effective way of dealing with siblings' complaints about one another.

Here are some suggestions for conducting effective family meetings:

- Make meetings official.
- Have meetings at a set time (ideally the same time every week), and end them on time.
- Be sure everyone follows some basic rules:
  - Let the person who is speaking finish without being interrupted.
  - Do not make fun of or judge others' ideas.
  - Promise not to use things others say during the meeting against them later.
- Ask each person for his views and feelings on the topic or problem being discussed.
- Discuss family activities as well as problems so the meetings include something positive.
- Express appreciation for each other, perhaps as a formal part of each meeting.
- Use a problem-solving strategy if necessary.
- Write down conclusions from the meeting and post them in a place where everyone can see them.
- Make the meetings fun. Consider serving dessert or pizza, or playing a game. Ask your children to suggest ideas for making the meetings a special time for the family.

## Problem-Solving Strategy

This problem-solving strategy is useful when there is an area of disagreement or a complicated problem whose solution requires several family members. It is the kind of strategy used by business “think tanks” to generate creative solutions. This strategy can help your family find solutions, too!

- Have one person state the problem needing to be solved, and then ask each family member to share his or her view of it until everyone agrees on a single statement of the problem. Somebody should write down the problem statement that is agreed upon on a piece of paper, chalkboard, or the computer so that everyone can see it.
- Have each family member say how he or she feels about the problem without being interrupted.
- Have each family member contribute to a list of potential solutions without passing judgment on the feasibility of the suggestions. Be sure to include suggestions that seem outrageous, as these help with creativity.
- Have each family member contribute to editing the list to eliminate impossible solutions.
- Combine the remaining solutions into a written plan with assignments for each family member, as needed. The assignments should be specific, and it should be possible for family members to tell whether assignments have been completed.
- Set a time to review the results as a family, usually in 2 to 3 weeks.
- Revise the plan according to which parts of it helped solve the problem and which did not.
- Repeat the process as needed.



Cite as: Howard BJ. 2002. Problem-solving strategy. In Jellinek M, Patel BP, Froehle MC, eds., *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health—Volume II. Tool Kit*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.

## Top TV Tips: Building a Balanced TV Diet

You are your child's first and most influential teacher. The values and coping behaviors your child learns now will last a lifetime. Use TV to promote your child's health by building a balanced TV diet.

### WATCH WHAT THEY EAT AND WATCH WHAT THEY WATCH

How much and what your child eats has a big impact on his health; so does how much and what TV he watches.

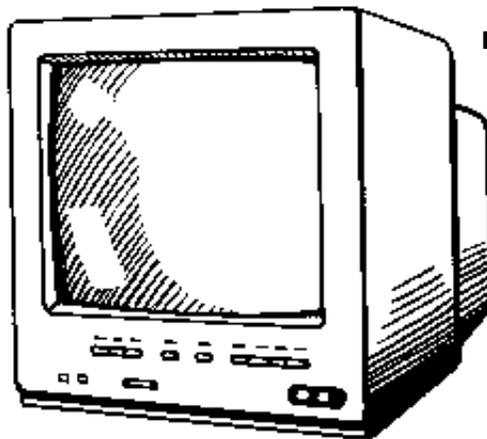
- Chart your family's current TV intake by listing all TV shows watched in a week.
- Discuss how much time your family spends watching TV, which programs are worthwhile, and which programs can be dropped in favor of other activities.
- Be a good TV-viewer role model for your child.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents limit their children's TV viewing to 1 to 2 hours of quality programming a day. Parents should also take advantage of high-quality programs offered on videocassettes or from other sources.

### KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE THE BOX

You carefully read the labels on the foods your child eats. Do the same with TV. Lots of sugary sweets are not good for children and adolescents. Neither are programs with violence, lewd language, and sexual overtones.

- Read the TV listings and reviews.
- Preview programs before your child sees them. Talk to teachers and your health professional to learn what programs they recommend.



- Select TV programs that build interest in other activities, such as reading, hobbies, or the outdoors.

### ADD PLENTY OF NUTRITIOUS CONTENT

Look for TV "main dishes" with educational content and positive characters and values. Research has indicated

that school readiness and verbal and math abilities were greater in children who watched *Sesame Street* and other educational programs than in those who did not (Wright and Huston, 1995).

### SIT DOWN WITH A GOOD "TV MEAL"; DON'T JUST SNACK AWAY

Don't let your child just "watch TV." The next time your child asks, "Can I watch TV?" ask her what specific program she wants to watch. Help your child get in the habit of watching one TV program, then turning the TV off and doing something else. Involve your child in setting TV rules.

Some other ideas for healthy TV viewing are as follows:

- Don't let your child watch TV until after his homework or chores are done.
- Make an extra effort to watch some shows with your child. By watching together, you are telling your child you care. "Co-viewing"

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and talking together about what you watch can lead to lasting educational benefits.

- Videotape quality shows and view them at a later time.

### **PUT DOWN THE CLICKER AND GET SOME FAMILY EXERCISE**

TV should not replace active play. Your TV diet will be most successful when it includes lots of “family exercises,” such as family discussions and activities.

TV programs should be springboards that spur curiosity, discussion, and learning.

To help your child learn from the programs she watches, you can take the following steps:

- Talk with your child. Ask questions before or during a program—for example, “What do you think will happen next?” Or, after the program, ask, “What did you learn from that program?” or “Why do you like to watch that character?”
- When you see a portrayal that offends you, let your child know. Teach your child that programs that glorify violence or promiscuity or that present gender, racial, cultural, or other stereotypes are against your values.

- Weave “a web of learning” for your child. Good TV programs can spark interest in related books, conversations, and activities.

For further information on TV content ratings to help you supervise the TV watching of your child, contact

TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board

P.O. Box 14097

Washington, DC 20004

Phone: (202) 879-9364

Web site: <http://www.tvguidelines.org>

### **REFERENCE**

Wright JR, Huston AC. 1995. *Effects of Educational TV Viewing of Lower Income Preschoolers on Academic Skills, School Readiness, and School Adjustment One to Three Years Later: A Report to Children's Television Workshop*. Austin, TX: Center for Research on the Influences of Television on Children (CRITC).

# Controlling the Video and Computer Game Playground

Here are several suggestions for establishing or regaining control of video game playing in your home.

## PLAYING GAMES IS A PRIVILEGE, NOT A RIGHT

If you make it clear to your child on the day you set up the video game system that playing video games is a privilege you have allowed him, you will be well on your way to regulating game play in your home. This approach enables you to use the system as a reward for positive behavior.

## SET TIME LIMITS

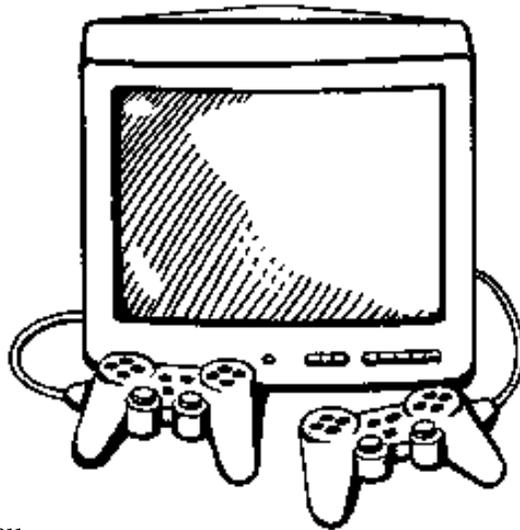
One way to avoid 5-hour playing stretches is to set a daily limit or establish a specific period each day when games can be played. Be flexible, though. A 1-hour limit for some games will make them unplayable.

## HOMEWORK COMES FIRST

Make your priorities clear. If your child fails to complete her homework and chores, or does a slipshod job of them, restrict access to the game system. To offset this punitive approach, you can reward your child by extending playing time or by renting a new game when extra effort is put into homework or chores.

## CONTROL THE CONTROLLERS

If your child insists on playing longer than you would like or plays in direct disobedience to your wishes, remove the controllers. Games cannot be played without the controllers.



## ENCOURAGE COOPERATIVE PLAY

Video games frequently cause squabbles among siblings. Consider the following solutions to this problem:

- Look for two-player games that offer a “cooperative play mode.”
- In some two-player competitive games, it is possible to set different difficulty levels for each child. You can use this feature to balance their playing skills.

- If the children really don't want to play together, schedule separate playing sessions for each child. Use a timer to signal when play stops for one child and starts for another.

## ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

It is easy for children to get hooked on video games, to the exclusion of almost everything else. Encourage and support the child's participation in other activities. If your child does not seem to be interested in anything other than video games, try getting him interested in other activities that are related to one of his favorite games. If your child prefers fantasy role-playing games, for example, you might encourage him to read some books with a fantasy theme or, using inexpensive art or building materials, help him construct a miniature fantasy kingdom.

## CONTROL GAME-RELATED SPENDING

Consider some of the following ideas to keep game-related expenses down:

- Rent rather than buy games.
- Swap games with friends.

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- Explore other avenues before granting your child permission to call a video game tip line. Other children in the neighborhood may have the game that is giving your child trouble. Game magazines and books can also provide the information needed to succeed at popular games.

### **CHOOSE GAMES APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR CHILD'S AGE AND ABILITY**

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is an independent, voluntary board set up to classify and provide information for parents and consumers on the content of video and computer games.

The ESRB offers the following tips for consumers:

- Look for the ESRB ratings on the front of the game package and for the content description on the back. If the game has an ESRB rating, you will find the distinctive black and white ESRB icon on the front of the package. The

ESRB content description, if applicable, can be found on the back of the package in a black and white box.

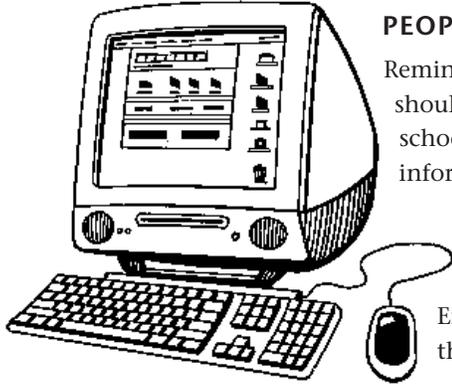
- If you can't find a rating, call the ESRB's toll-free number, (800) 771-ESRB (3772), to obtain rating information.
- Examine the package carefully to see if the publisher recommends the game for particular age groups. ESRB ratings assess the content of the game, not the skill level.
- Examine the pictures and text on the product's packaging for clues to the game's content.
- Ask the salesperson if you can try the product in the store before purchasing it or if someone at the store can demonstrate it for you.

More information about the ratings of video and computer games is available on the Media Awareness Network Web site at <http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/indus/games/esrb.htm> and on the ESRB Web site at <http://www.esrb.org>.

Sources: Copyright © 1994 by Janet Schwartz and Steven Schwartz. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of Prima Publishing from the book *Parents' Guide to Video Games* by Janet Schwartz and Steven Schwartz. Web site: <http://www.screen.com/mnet/eng/med/home/manmed/manvidg.htm>.

Information on the ESRB adapted from Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) Web site. 2000. ESRB Parents Guide. Web site: [http://www.esrb.org/parents\\_guide.asp](http://www.esrb.org/parents_guide.asp).

## Safety Tips for Surfing the Internet



### **PEOPLE YOUR CHILD MEETS ON THE INTERNET ARE STRANGERS**

Remind your child that people she meets on the Internet are strangers. Just as she should not give out her address, her telephone number, her name, the location of her school, or any other information to a stranger, she should not give out personal information to people she meets on the Internet.

### **TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT WHAT HE SEES AND DOES ON THE INTERNET**

Encourage your child to talk to you right away about anything on the Internet that makes him feel uncomfortable.

### **ASK YOUR CHILD ABOUT THE PEOPLE SHE MEETS ON THE INTERNET**

Make sure that your child talks to you directly about anyone she has met on the Internet who wants to meet her in person.

### **MEETING "FRIENDS" FROM THE INTERNET IN PERSON REQUIRES ADULT SUPERVISION**

Establish a firm rule that your child may not go to meet someone he met on the Internet unless a parent or other responsible adult goes with him.

### **E-MAILING PERSONAL INFORMATION SHOULD BE DONE ONLY WITH PERMISSION**

Explain to your child that it is not safe to e-mail pictures of herself or any other personal information without first checking with you. Let her know that just as it is important that you know who her friends are and what she does with her friends, it is important that she talks with you before beginning an e-mail friendship with a new person.

### **HAVE FREQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT CONVERSATIONS AND MESSAGES HE RECEIVES THROUGH THE INTERNET**

Encourage your child to talk to you about any messages that are mean or make him feel uncomfortable. Reassure your child that he is not to blame if he gets a message of that kind. Urge him to confide in you, reminding him that you are on his team.

### **SET CLEAR HOUSE RULES ABOUT INTERNET USE**

As with all media, set limits on Internet use. Be clear about your rules and expectations, and let your child know that you want her to enjoy the Internet for the wonderful resource it is. Emphasize that the guidelines you have set up will enable her to enjoy the Internet safely.

*Source:* Adapted, with permission, from National Institute on Media and the Family. 1999. Safety tips for surfing the net. Web site: <http://www.mediafamily.org>. Phone: (888) 672-5437.

## Parents' Roles in Teaching Respect

Showing respect is a sophisticated communication skill. It is based on a guiding belief in the importance of expressing consideration for others. Outlined below are tips for teaching respect. Parents need to be patient; learning respect takes time.



- Show respect to your growing child through all of your daily ups and downs together, even when setting a limit or giving a consequence for misbehavior.
- Begin early to teach your child about the feelings, ideas, and opinions of others; find opportunities every day to repeat these messages to your child as she grows.
- Meet respectful behavior with praise and recognition; privately express disappointment and disapproval to your child when you observe your child exhibiting disrespectful behavior.
- Talk with your child in advance about how to ask questions of a teacher; how to behave during church; how to act at a play, concert, or birthday party; and so forth. Help your child plan how to show respect in these and other situations.
- Help your child learn that everyone has different likes and dislikes. Fun ways to help your child learn about how people are different include going to museums, listening to a variety of music styles, and tasting foods from different cultures. Teach your child to show respect for individual differences and preferences.
- Be a good role model by showing respect in your daily interactions with others.

Source: Copyright © 2000 by Bobbi Conner. Reprinted from the book *Everyday Opportunities for Extraordinary Parenting* with permission of its publisher, Sourcebooks, Inc. (800-43-BRIGHT).

## Successful Adaptation to Separation or Divorce

By using the following tips you can help your child adapt to separation or divorce.

- Emphasize that the divorce or separation is entirely a parental decision and not your child's fault.
- Mention, if true, that every effort was made to preserve the marriage or family unit.
- Point out, if true, that the decision is irreversible.
- Be open to and encourage your child's inevitable questions; if your child does not ask questions, do not assume that "everything is okay." Be prepared to repeatedly offer answers to your child's questions in the months following your announcement of the separation or divorce. Many young adults who were children when their parents divorced feel no one talked to them about the divorce.
- Reassure your child that her needs will be met. Explain where she will live and go to school, where the other parent will live, and when she will see the other parent.
- Try to avoid moving, if possible, so that your child can continue to attend the same school and maintain relationships with friends.
- Reassure your child that both parents love him and, if true, will continue to have a close relationship with him.
- When possible, offer adult support from other relatives, teachers, primary care health professionals, clergy, or family friends. Fewer than 10 percent of children of divorced families report additional nonfamily adult support.



- Try to spend individual time with each of your children every day.
- Avoid using your child as a messenger, "pawn," or spy.
- Do not ask your child to take sides. Try to avoid saying negative things about the other parent in front of your child. Raise your child in an atmosphere where the conflict between separated or divorced parents is minimal or readily resolved.
- Be aware that many children do not know their parents' marriage is troubled. Few children experience relief with the divorce decision; those who do are usually older and have witnessed open conflict between their parents. Watch for changes in behavior and school functioning, as this may be a symptom of psychological distress.
- Know that sleep disturbances among young children after a separation or divorce are common. The preoccupying worry is usually abandonment by both parents. Repeated reassurance may help.
- Try to establish a stable and predictable routine for meals, bedtime, and other regular activities.
- Keep promises to your child.
- Respect generational boundaries. Do not share adult concerns with your child. Refrain from treating your child as a peer, as this may overwhelm her with feeling responsible for taking care of you.

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## Successful Adaptation to Separation or Divorce (continued)

- Maintain discipline. A diminished ability to parent is an expectable short-term (but not long-term) consequence of divorce. Take care of your own mental health needs.
  - Be aware that your child may be especially sensitive to worries about being alone. A child's fear of abandonment at the time of the family breakup may be unintentionally reinforced by subtle changes in his parents' attitudes and behaviors.
  - Demonstrate your skills in conflict resolution. Avoid needless provocation or name-calling, hear your child out, and work toward mutually satisfying solutions.
  - Develop a new relationship with your former partner in which you do not undermine his or her parental role.
  - Develop a new or altered concept of effective family functioning by taking classes, joining parenting groups, going to counseling, and finding new family role models.
  - Help your child resolve losses, anger, and self-blame; help her accept the breakup and achieve realistic hopes for relationships.
  - Always remember birthdays, holidays, and other special occasions.
  - Attend special activities in which your child is a participant.
- Know that no single circumstance is associated with poor outcome. Protective factors that can help avoid a poor outcome include ongoing communication among family members, your child's ability to remain separate from parental conflict and distress, and resuming customary pursuits.
  - Develop a new, meaningful life of your own.
  - If discord between you and your partner is ongoing, you have difficulty following through with the above recommendations, or your child is having problems doing the things he normally does, ask your primary care health professional for more advice or referral for counseling.

### RESOURCE

Wolf A. 1988. *Why Did You Have to Get a Divorce? And When Can I Get a Hamster?* New York, NY: Noonday Press.

### REFERENCES

- Green M. 1988. Reaching out to the children of divorce. *Contemporary Pediatrics* 5(2):22-42.
- Wallerstein JS, Blakeslee S. 1996. *Second Chances: Men, Women & Children a Decade After Divorce*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Wallerstein JS, Kelly JB. 1996. *Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Green M. 1988. Reaching out to the children of divorce. *Contemporary Pediatrics* 5(2):22-42.

## How to Address Bullying

If your child has had problems with bullying or aggressive behavior or has been the victim of a bully, the following suggestions may be helpful.

### IF YOUR CHILD HAS BULLIED OTHERS

- If you see your child bullying someone, put a stop to the behavior immediately, and have your child practice a more appropriate behavior instead. For example, if your child pushes his sister away from a toy so that he can play with it, have him practice several times asking for and receiving the toy.
- If your child has been bullying someone, and you do not find out until later, find a way that she can “make amends” (e.g., giving back something that was taken from another child with an apology).
- Try to supervise situations in which bullying may occur. If you cannot be present, try to find someone who can. If no one is available, consider not letting your child participate in that situation.
- Be aware of your own behavior, modeling for your child how you would like him to treat others.
- Avoid the use of physical punishment (e.g., spanking), which may give your child the message that physical aggression is OK. Instead, use removal of privileges, work tasks at home, or helping younger children at home or in the neighborhood as consequences for bullying behavior.
- Let your child’s school psychologist, teacher, or guidance counselor know about your concerns, and ask for their assistance in addressing the problem.
- Be sure that you are being as positive as possible with your child. Aim for 10 positive comments for every negative one that you make to your child. You may have to search very hard or be very creative in “catching your child being good.”

### IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN THE VICTIM OF BULLYING

- Have your child practice straightforwardly and assertively telling the other child to “stop bothering me” and then moving away.
- Problem-solve with your child about what she can do to avoid situations in which she may be bullied, and what to do the next time she is bullied (e.g., walking to school with a parent, older sibling, or friend; telling a responsible adult if she is bullied).

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- Try to supervise situations in which bullying may occur. If you cannot be present, try to find someone who can. If no one is available, consider not letting your child participate in that situation.
- Be aware of the toll that bullying may be taking on your child's self-esteem. Actively look for ways to boost your child's self-image (e.g., supporting him in pursuing his skills or talents).
- Let your child's school psychologist, teacher, or guidance counselor know about your concerns, and ask for their assistance in addressing the problem. Many schools have anti-bullying programs. If your school doesn't, suggest that it start one.

## IF YOUR CHILD IS A BYSTANDER

- Teach your child how to help without getting hurt. Your child might say, "Cool it! This isn't going to solve anything."
- Tell your child not to cheer on or even quietly watch a conflict; this only encourages the bully, who is trying to be the center of attention.
- Encourage your child to tell a trusted adult about the bullying. Talking to an adult is not "tattling"; it is an act of courage and promotes safety. Suggest to your child that she take a friend with her when she tells about bullying, to make it easier.
- Help your child support children who tend to be victims. Teach your child to try to include these children in activities.



Portions of this tool were modeled on: Slaby RG, Bernstein JY. 2000. Bullying—It's not O.K. In Sege R, ed., *Violence Prevention for Children and Youth: Parent Education Cards* (2nd ed.). Waltham, MA: Massachusetts Medical Society. Phone: (800) 322-2303.

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Batsche G, Moore B. 2000. Bullying fact sheet. In *Behavioral Interventions: Creating a Safe School Environment*. Winter 2000, pp. 10–12. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

# My School Sheet

This is a sheet that you can fill out with your parents, and share with your health professional. It will help your parents and your health professional learn more about what school is like for you and ways that they can help you feel good about school and learning.

## FUN AND LEARNING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Things I am good at doing:

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Things I would like to learn/read about with my family:

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Places I would like to visit with my family (ideas: parks, museums, libraries):

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## MY FRIENDS

Friends who go to my school:

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Friends who live near me:

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Things I like to do with my friends in school:

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Things I like to do with my friends outside of school:

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## GOALS FOR SCHOOL

### Early Elementary School (K-3)

What I am learning to do:

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What I am good at:

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*(continued on next page)*

*My School Sheet (continued)*

What is harder for me:

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**Late Elementary School (4–6)**

My subjects:

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Grades my parents expect me to get:

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Grades I want to get:

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Grades I think I'll get:

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**STUDY TIME**

Places that are comfortable for me to do homework:

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Favorite times of the day to study:

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Things that make it hard for me to study:

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**ABOUT MY SCHOOL**

Activities I enjoy most at school:

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How often my parents and teachers talk together:

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*Cite as:* Spratt E. 2002. My school sheet. In Jellinek M, Patel BP, Froehle MC, eds., *Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health—Volume II. Tool Kit*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.

## Homework Tips

Parents have a strong influence on their child's success in school. By supporting and praising your child's academic efforts and creating an atmosphere at home that encourages learning and doing homework, you can help your child do well in school.

Children have a wide range of approaches to doing homework. The following hints can be adapted to your child's homework style and pace.



- Respect your child's need to "recharge" himself after school, before starting homework. Some children want to have a snack, whereas others prefer to draw, do something physically active, play with a friend, read, listen to music, or watch a videotape.
- Establish a regular time and place to begin homework.
  - Make family activities that precede or follow homework—such as playing a game, cooking, or making crafts—a regular part of the homework routine. Shared activities assure the child that she will have time with parents, making it less likely that she will seek their attention while she is doing her homework.
  - During homework time, make sure siblings are not engaged in distracting activities (e.g., playing computer or video games, watching television).
- Recognize that an occasional break from steady concentration on homework helps some children stay on task.
- Be available to interpret assignments and questions, explain the meaning of unfamiliar words, review spelling or multiplication tables, or otherwise assist your child with his homework.
- Discuss topics for "show and tell," and preview talks that your child is preparing. If your child asks you for ideas for a presentation or project, try to build on her interests. Support her ideas even if she decides not to accept your suggestions.
- Parents' approaches to doing their own "homework" can serve as positive examples for their child. For example, do your own work reports, reading, bill paying, or letter writing while your child is doing his homework. This will demonstrate to your child the importance of responsibly completing work, while allowing him to enjoy your presence and turn to you with questions about his assignments if necessary.
- Help your child develop good organizational skills, such as keeping an assignment book and placing completed homework in a book bag ready to be taken to school each day.
- Comment on the schoolwork your child brings home, posting it on the refrigerator door, proudly telling other people about your child's accomplishments, and praising your child for her effort and success.

Source: Adapted, with permission, from Green M, Sullivan P, Eichberg C. 1999. Homework conflicts, skirmishes, and wars. *Contemporary Pediatrics* 16(9):54–73.

# Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting Checklist

## WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)?

Children with disabilities, including learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), mental disorders, mental retardation, and pervasive developmental disorders, may be eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is required by IDEA for each eligible child. The IEP specifies the services needed to fulfill the child's right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). An eligible child who has a disability and needs special education is entitled to the services set forth in the IEP.

The IEP is a written plan describing the special education and related services designed to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability. It contains goals and objectives based on the student's present levels of educational performance, specifies the educational placement and setting, and describes the related services and supports necessary for the student to benefit from the special education program. A team composed of professionals, the child's parents, and the child (where appropriate) meet to develop the IEP. The IEP team must discuss the following specific information about the child, including the child's strengths, the parents' ideas for enhancing the child's education, the results of recent evaluations or reevaluations, and how the child has done on state and districtwide tests.

## BEFORE THE IEP MEETING

1. Obtain and study all school records including private assessments, medical records, and so forth. Obtain copies of the following:
  - Prior IEPs (if any)
  - Progress notes, report cards, teachers' notes, work samples, and so forth
  - A draft copy of the new IEP if it has been developed
2. Talk with people who have worked with or evaluated your child to see how they think your child is progressing.
3. Inform your child's health professionals that you are preparing for an IEP meeting. Talk to them about issues they feel should be discussed, the services they feel your



child needs, and goals that are appropriate for your child. Ask them to submit written statements. You might also ask if they can attend the meeting or contact the school by phone.

4. Familiarize yourself with IDEA and the rules and regulations regarding the IEP process. See the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP>) and the IDEA '97 (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA>) Web sites for more information.
5. Review the present IEP (if there is one) to see if you think the goals have been met. If this is a first IEP, obtain a copy of a sample IEP form.
6. Make a list of your child's present level of functioning based on your observations. Include an assessment of your child's skills in the following areas:
  - Academic (specify if skills vary by subject)
  - Developmental (if pre-academic)
  - Motor
  - Speech/language
  - Social
  - Self-help
  - Prevocational and vocational
  - Other
7. Consider making an appointment with your child's teacher to observe your child in the classroom.
8. Make a list of goals for your child, and consider how these goals can best be met.
9. List services your child may need, including:
  - Special education services and related services (e.g., transportation, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology services, parent counseling and training, psychological services)
  - Transition services
  - Special considerations needed in the regular classroom and for homework
10. If you have questions to be resolved or issues of concern for one or two members of the IEP team or individu-

*(continued on next page)*

## Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting Checklist (continued)

als who will have input into the IEP, try to work them out before the IEP meeting. You should maintain an ongoing dialogue with your child's teacher and open communication all year long so issues can be resolved as they arise.

11. Arrange for someone to attend the meeting with you, if you like.
12. You are allowed to tape the meeting. Many parents find this helpful for future reference. If you plan to tape the meeting, it can be helpful to politely notify the school in advance that you are going to do so.

### DURING THE IEP MEETING

1. Remember that you are an equal member of the IEP team.
2. Ask to review the current IEP (if there is one). Talk about which teaching methods and materials worked and which did not. Discuss what approaches you feel will assist your child in learning.
3. Be sure you understand the words used in the IEP and in the meeting, all the test results, and any new goals that are suggested. Compare the school's goals with your goals. Ask for clarification if you need to, and ask about the implications of what is said in the meeting. Take notes, and read back your notes to other members of the IEP team on any critical issues to ensure mutual understanding.
4. Be prepared to listen to others' points of view, and be sure your views are heard. Be assertive, but stay calm.
5. Remember that services are based on individual need, not availability. If needed services are not available, be sure that this is stated on the IEP form, as well as when the services will be made available. Services and assistive technology must be provided even if not currently available in your child's school. Remember that services must be provided in the least restrictive setting appropriate for your child.
6. Discuss the amount of special education and regular education your child requires.
7. Write the IEP with goals that you understand and that a teacher and other staff can use to measure progress. How progress will be measured should be clearly stated in the IEP.
8. The IEP should include any accommodations and changes to your child's regular education classes that may be needed, including both physical and academic accom-

modations (e.g., assistive technology, homework and testing accommodations).

### AT THE END OF THE IEP MEETING

1. Make sure that all blanks and spaces in the IEP form are filled in.
2. Make sure that all the related services and the duration and amount that your child needs of each are listed.
3. Make sure the amount of time your child will spend in regular education is listed.
4. The law ensures a process for resolving differences. If you cannot come to an agreement, you may request another meeting. Do not feel pressured to make a decision immediately. You may write on the IEP form that you do not agree, or identify the portions with which you do not agree. You might wish to initial those areas with which you agree and request a 30-day interim IEP. If you feel it is necessary, you can also ask for mediation, request due process, or file a written complaint with the state education agency.

### AFTER THE IEP MEETING

1. Ask for a copy of the IEP meeting minutes, and send back a copy of any corrections.
2. Obtain a copy of the IEP for your records.
3. Share a copy of the IEP with your child's health professionals.
4. Observe your child's program to ensure that your child receives the services contained in the IEP and that the school is working actively toward achieving the IEP goals. The school is required to report on your child's progress as often as nondisabled children receive progress reports.
5. Remember that you can ask for a review of your child's IEP at any time during the school year.

### WHAT IS MY CHILD'S ROLE IN THE IEP PROCESS?

Your child should be involved in developing the IEP as appropriate. Involving the student can help increase his skills in self-advocacy, such as learning to discuss his strengths and weaknesses and any strategies and supports that may be needed. This will lead to increased independence and self-esteem. However, if the process is contentious, it may be best for your child not to be present.

Sources: Fairfax County Public Schools. 1998. *Questions and Answers for Parents Prior to an IEP Meeting*. Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Public Schools.

IEP Meeting Checklist for Parents. Source unknown.

Learning Disabilities Association. 1997. *How to Participate Effectively in the IEP Process*. Pittsburgh, PA: Learning Disabilities Association.

## School Basic Information Form

As \_\_\_\_\_'s health professional I am interested in his/her progress in school. To assist me in providing care, I would appreciate it if a school representative would complete the following form after obtaining appropriate permission from the family. Thank you for your assistance.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Current grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School name, address, phone, and fax:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Contact people at school: *Please circle preferred contact(s):*

	Name (and phone if different from above)	Best times to call
Teacher		
Principal		
Other		

Classroom type:

- Regular
- Learning disabilities (SLD)
- Developmental handicap
- Severe behavioral handicap (SBH/SED)
- Gifted and talented
- Other (please describe):

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*(continued on next page)*

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School Basic Information Form (continued)

What concerns does the school have about this child? (check all that apply)

- Possible attention deficit (ADHD)
  - Possible neurological problems
  - Possible medical causes of learning problems
  - Possible psychological/emotional problems
  - Other (please specify):
- 

Is a learning disability or cognitive delay suspected?

- No learning disability/cognitive delay suspected
  - Learning disability or low IQ suspected (please explain why):
- 
- 

Is this child's behavior a problem?

- No
  - Yes (please describe):
- 
- 
- 

Does this child have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Accommodation Plan (AP)?

- Yes, see attached copy (please include all psychological/educational assessments)
- Yes, but copy not available; IEP or AP was done on \_\_\_\_\_
- No current IEP or AP

To convey other information or to ask additional questions, please use the back of this form or attach additional sheets as necessary. Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this form. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Following is my contact information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Twenty Free Ways to Love Your Child



1. Set aside time just to talk with your child. No phones, no TV, just talk. Find out what happened during your child's day.
2. In good weather, sit outside with your child and watch the world go by, even if it's only for 10 minutes.
3. Make family routines and traditions. Try to share at least one meal as a family every day. If weekdays are impossible, then every weekend.
4. Talk to your child about school and friends.
5. Tell your child you love her.
6. Tell her again.
7. Go to the park. Walk around; swing on the swings.
8. Pay attention to what your child is doing. Things that seem mundane to parents can be very important to children. Share your child's little victories.
9. Let your child help with what you are doing.
10. Show interest in your child's thoughts and feelings so he will be more willing to come to you with his problems and concerns.
11. Respect your child's thoughts and feelings. Her feelings are as real to her as yours are to you.
12. Tell your child you love him.
13. Tell him again.
14. Look at your child when you talk together. If she sees you reading a newspaper or watching TV while she is talking, she may believe that what she is saying is unimportant to you.
15. Catch your child being good, and praise him.
16. Make a bedtime routine that you try to stick to every night. Children like routines, and it can be a great time for sharing the day's events.
17. Read a story together.
18. Make something with your child. Make brownies or a birdhouse.
19. Tell your child you love her. Hug her.
20. Tell her again. Hug her again.

Source: Adapted, with permission, from The Crusade Against Child Abuse. *20 Free Ways to Love Your Child*. Charlotte, NC: The Crusade Against Child Abuse. A project of Thompson Children's Home. Phone: (704) 536-0375.