

TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES – The BIG 4

Elements of development 5th Grade:

physical – girls tower over many of the boys, hormonal development in full swing

social – kids are truly beginning to pair off – best friends, sports groups – 2nd Family

emotional – it's all about BELONGING: for girls – intensifying as relationships define them; for boys, they are learning who and how to avoid or maneuver around certain people and situations “Where do I fit in?”

academic – the workload is getting tougher – can I handle it?

What Can You Do? BE AWARE

- Do suggest opportunities of things we can do together
- Don't be hurt when I turn you down – reject your ideas – I am busy figuring me out
- Do drive me whenever you can – but not at my whim and convenience
- Do have dinner together
- Do allow me to have my own experiences – Your emotional connection will begin to outweigh your physical connection
- Don't try to do the same things – This is “my” music
- Do be “In the Know”
- Don't expect it to be easy
- Justice and Fairness trump all
- Don't be surprised if I only see black and white – and need concrete repetition
- I will want a lot – but often will fail to appreciate it (I will lose most stuff I get)
- I have been left out, and I may even tell you about it... but don't ask

1) Preparing for School - After School - Weekends

Night before: Homework
Lunch
Clothing – school, gym, afterschool

Day of: Teeth
Breakfast
Review of plans
Peek in backpack

Afterschool:

- Agree on plans the night before
- Establish 24-hr rule for social gatherings/events
- Avoid end-of-school rescue (change of plans, pick-ups/drop-offs)
- You are instilling consistency, boundaries and respect for your time

Weekend plans:

- Plan several days ahead for sleepovers
- Fridays trump Saturdays (time to recover from physical and social exhaustion)
- Limit number of guests – a pair is better than 3 or more
- Some of your children will hate sleepovers – perfect

- Touch base with fellow parent – avoid surprises

Think of your end goal – competent, independent, can handle self in different, and difficult situations, better planner, leader – minimize the drama, social exhaustion and over-exposure

2) Walking into Town

- Supervision is a must – impulsive decision and risk-shift rule
- Make them earn it – make it occasional (privilege)
- Fall – on a special occasion; spring – avoid more than 1/week
- Springtime preferable – easy to limit with colder weather
- Remember, kids are busy being kids, all accelerator – no brakes, impressing/one-upping each other – running, darting, shoplifting – Test drive with them to see how they will respond

3) Cell Phones

- Hold off as long as possible – multiple life lessons (i.e., instant gratification, distraction, drama, impulsive use and addictive ‘sends’, socializing one on one, with confidence)
- Start with emergency use and time-limited, texted-limited features – so you have something to work toward – earn!
- Uphold school rules – in locker throughout day
- Rein in the monster – reset the baseline and don’t be afraid to take away the privilege when poor behavior occurs
- Check-ins often disastrous as it leads to last minute ‘unplans’

4) Coupling

Pre-Dating Behavior – Everyone has a ‘boyfriend’ trends each year

- Girls seem more aggressive, they are truly just more advanced physically, emotionally, socially, and hormonally
- Boys and girls begin the mating dance in different ways and timeframes
- Classic signs, they become increasingly secretive, giddy, awkward, image-consumed, and live through friends approval of their choices.

Tips –

- Celebrate diverse friendships – encourage them to move between groups, teams, experiences, so they learn how to socially cue/maneuver
- Do not over-value or glamorize the dating scene, as it pressures kids into believing that they need to “go further.”
- Dating should be put off until their emotional development has caught up with physical and psychological development, likely high school.
- Phrases like, “I am so glad you have such close friends, but we don’t allow dating during middle school.”
- Communicate openly and positively about physical and social attractions as well as physical and emotional development – so it doesn’t become the forbidden fruit