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# Top 15 Things Your Middle School Kid Wishes You Knew

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1. Respect me. I'm my own person, not just your kid. Sometimes I might have opinions that differ from yours. Sometimes I just want to be your baby. Respect me either way.
2. I still want to have fun with you, and feel like home is safe and happy. Smile at me.
3. I need to make some of my own choices, and maybe some of my own mistakes. Don't do my work for me or get me out of every jam. You don't need to be better than me at everything. Don't condescend; you don't need to impart your elderly wisdom on me if I have a problem. Please wait for me to ask for your help. If I don't ask for it, I might want to work it out for myself. Let me rant without offering advice. Sometimes that's all I really need, just to talk my way through something and for you to just listen to me.
4. Sometimes I'm going to be moody and annoyed and frustrated. You need to just let that happen (though you shouldn't let me be rude to you; that's weird and embarrassing). It might just be a mood or something might be going on that I'm not ready to talk about yet. If you hang around doing stuff near me and don't interrupt or try to solve it as soon as I start, I might feel comfortable talking with you about things.
5. Trust that I'll do my work. If I don't, you can help me manage my time, but wait until I'm not taking care of responsibilities to think I can't. Don't just assume I can't handle responsibility because of my age. Believe in me.
6. It feels really good when you ask me to teach you about what I'm learning or what I'm good at. You don't have to be awesome at computer programming to let me teach you some cool stuff, for instance. I have to be a beginner constantly. Show me it's OK to stay relaxed and present when you are struggling to learn something.
7. I don't like the drama either, and it surprises me as much as it does you. You think it's rough having this alien lunatic in your *house*? Try having it in your body, and you can't even get away.
8. If you don't like my friends, it feels like you don't trust my judgment or like I am stupid about choosing friends. Or both. Ask me what I like about them, or what we have fun doing together, or just to tell you about a new friend. Stay open-minded. Still, if you think my friends are being bad to me, I need you on my side that much more.

9. Sometimes I am completely overwhelmed and need to zone out for a while. I am not becoming a slug and will not stay in my room staring at a screen for the rest of my life. Maybe just for the rest of the afternoon.

10. I will fight you every step of the way if you make me do stuff I don't want to do (get some exercise, do my homework, write a thank-you note, practice piano, apologize to my sister, take a shower, wear deodorant... *so many things*), but you should probably make me do them anyway. I know I will feel better if I sweat and shower each day, and develop my study skills, and show up tomorrow prepared, and, and, and. I know! But please don't overwhelm me. I might not be able to do what I should right away. I might need reminders, later, which will annoy me completely. Remind me anyway.

11. Explain why I'm being criticized or punished. It feels scary if I don't understand anything beyond that you are mad at me. And sometimes what I need more than a scolding is a hug or a cuddle. Especially when I am more porcupine than puppy.

12. I need to have private jokes with my friends and not explain them to you. It's how we bond. You don't need to be involved in every aspect of my life to still be loved and needed by me.

13. If my social life gets to be too much, I may need you to force a little vacation from it on me. But most of time what I need is to work through how to navigate life online and with peers. Now is my chance to learn how to deal, *with your help*. Just shutting it down keeps me from learning how to build my life online with scaffolding provided by you. Stay calm and cool, let me explain what's going on, and talk things through with me. Ask more, tell less.

14. Especially if I've been feeling stressed, maybe you could just hang out with me. Go to the park or get an ice cream or have a catch, whatever; it feels good to just do something together without discussing or solving or teaching anything.

15. I like it when you think I'm funny. Or interesting. Or awesome. I actually do care what you think about me. Please find something specific you actually like about me because sometimes I can't find anything in myself to like at all. I might roll my eyes, but your words and judgments do matter to me, and I will remember them, the good and the bad. I will keep them with me like treasures even when I lose my keys and wallet and ID. Which I probably will. More than once. Sorry.

*And bonus extra important thing you should know:* The fact that my opinions on this and anything else might change tomorrow does not mean I don't feel them fiercely today. Keep up. I love you. Remind me you still love me, too.

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