# **AWAREness Tips: For Families of Middle School Students\***

* **Sleep**
	+ Adolescents who get 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep every night have a reduced risk of experiencing depression, have better grades, have higher standardized test scores, and have an overall better quality of life (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014). [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
* **Discipline**
	+ Relationships between parent and child can become stressful as adolescent children become more independent. It’s normal to get angry or irritated sometimes, but try to avoid threatening punishments that you can't follow through with, such as "You're grounded for a year!" Decide on consequences that are fair, and then carry them out consistently (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). <https://casel.org>
* **Criticism**
	+ When your child makes mistakes, try to focus your conversation about what he or she did well before talking about what can be improved. “I noticed you got all of the multiplication questions on your math test right, you must have practiced your times tables! What do you think we can do to get those division problems worked out correctly?” Praising specific strengths helps maintain your child’s self-esteem (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). <https://casel.org>
* **Social/Emotional**
	+ Children can develop healthy social and emotional skills through an adult modeling or coaching how to recognize feelings (e.g., Are you feeling mad?). Identifying and discussing emotions with your child can help them have positive social relationships and deal with their emotions appropriately (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2015). <https://casel.org>
	+ You can help your children develop competence or the feeling of being able to handle a situation effectively by recognizing the successes of siblings individually. Avoid directly comparing your children to each other (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007). [healthychildren.org/](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/default.aspx)
	+ **Communicate regularly and openly with your child so they know that they are not alone.** Talk with your child about your own experiences and fears when you were an adolescent to help them understand that their anxieties are not uncommon (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007). [https://www.healthychildren.org/](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/Pages/default.aspx)
* **Substance Abuse/Safety**
* 1 in 5 parents think what they say has little influence on their child’s choice to use drugs or alcohol. Don’t be discouraged, talking to your children about the dangers of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs significantly reduces the likelihood of adolescent substance abuse. Learn more about preventing substance abuse at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/Spot081-Parents/Spot081-Parents.pdf>
* **Academic/developmental Enrichment**
* Reading skills are essential for your child’s success in school and work. Modeling reading and reading together not only improves your child’s ability to read but also influences if they will find enjoyment in reading as it shows you value it. Public libraries and school libraries are free sources of age-appropriate reading materials and are a safe and supportive environment to foster the development of reading. Learn more about developing your child’s ability to read from <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/reading.htm>
* **After School Activity**
	+ Consider enrolling your child in an organized after school activity. Students in these programs have higher standardized math test scores and less behavioral issues than students who spend after-school time without adult supervision (Institute of Education Sciences, 2009). [ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/)

**\*These are examples of AWAREness tips that your district could compile to remind families and educators about social, emotional, and behavioral support.**

# **AWAREness Tips: For Middle School Educators\***

* **Trauma-Informed Approach**
* Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed realizes the widespread-impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and other involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.
* Trauma can occur as a result of violence, abuse, neglect, loss, disaster, war, and other emotionally harmful experiences. Children bring their experiences of trauma into the school systems, often interfering with their school success. Harsh disciplinary practices in schools like seclusion, restraint, or removal, are often trauma-inducing themselves. Such practices often interfere with the desired outcome of support.
* Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach
1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues
* **Bullying**
* Help prevent bullying in your school by creating supportive relationships between teachers and students and among students to encourage open communication and positive ways to resolve conflicts. School norms, values, and policies that emphasize respect for others and an appreciation of individual differences can help prevent bullying at the source. Learn more about bully prevention at <https://casel.org>
* **Teacher Stress-Reduction**
	+ Studies show that teachers who engage in mindfulness activities, such as deep breathing, reflection, yoga, and meditation are less stressed, have more positive relationships with students, and manage their classrooms more effectively. Learn more at <https://casel.org> (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013).
* **Student Anxiety & Disruptive Behaviors**
	+ Some children react to anxiety with powerful “fight or flight” behaviors. Their overwhelming struggle to escape an anxious situation can be very disruptive in the classroom setting and is often misread as anger or opposition. By creating trusting relationships with their students, teachers can better identify student anxiety and provide them with tools to better handle their anxiety and avoid meltdowns. <http://www.childmind.org/en/posts/articles/2013-3-26-anxiety-and-disruptive-behavior>
* **Suicide Prevention**
* Suicide is not only a concern with older teenagers. Nearly 40 percent of adolescents who attempt suicide make their first attempt during middle school. Youth who feel suicidal are not likely to seek help directly. Learn the warnings signs and take immediate action if you feel a student may be at risk of suicide (NASP, 2015). <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/suicideprevention.aspx>
* **Substance Abuse/Safety**
* Children and youths who live in foster care are at a heightened risk for substance abuse. Teens in foster care are less likely to talk to their guardian about the dangers of substance abuse and are less likely to report participating in school-based prevention programs compared to those not in foster care. Learn more about substance abuse at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/spot141-teens-foster-care-2014.pdf>

**\*These are examples of AWAREness tips that your district could compile to remind families and educators about social, emotional, and behavioral support.**