



Middle School Student Sound Off

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I wish the adults in my life better understood that being a middle schooler isn't as easy as it looks. Stress is constantly being put on you. Not just while pursuing your educational prowess, but stress is being put on you physically, mentally and socially. Middle schoolers face the adversity of continuously getting good grades, handling conflict (internal and external) and being socially accepted.

Many adults in my life and maybe yours always like to use the words "Back in my day" or compare their life experiences with ours. Though, this is not fair in any way and definitely not equivalent. Adults are, of course, adults. They are a different generation so they can't relate to what we say is happening in our generation currently. They don't understand and often dispute the fact that times have changed and people don't act the same way they do anymore. Yes, they can relate in some aspects, but mostly there is no way for them to truly understand the impact of our experiences like we do.

Middle school is tricky. We come straight out of elementary school and people start to really grow and blossom into their true personalities. This is a good thing for young people. They get to find out who they truly are and express themselves in a way that makes them comfortable. Though, there are instances where that turns into a bad thing. If you dare to be different or out of the "Norm", you get laughed at, weird looks and gossiped about. Many adults like to say that we should ignore them and focus on ourselves. While that is true, it's hard to do because you are still coming up, and it hurts to know people don't like the real you. This causes many middle schoolers to adopt personalities that don't belong to them. It's stressful to keep up and act up just to fit in, and it's stressful if you don't because of all the criticism you could face. Not to mention the bullying that goes on online. Cyber bullying has become very popular in our generation since all the kids have at least one social media app. Being dragged online for everyone to see and comment on is absolutely soul crushing.

Another challenge middle schoolers face is grades. You might be thinking “How are grades so challenging? All you have to do is focus and study.” While that is true, it’s a bit more complex than you think. Adults argue that middle school is a child’s prime. This is not true at all. Middle schoolers have a lot of stress on them about their future and grades. In middle school, all four quarters of seventh grade and the first quarter of eighth grade are very important. If you want to be in the IB program for high school, you need to have a 3.0 average in just your core classes. If you want to pursue a career in something special, for example performing arts, the performing arts school would have to view your grades for all five of those quarters and they can either accept or deny you. Although, this is not as easy as it seems. In sixth grade, you just came from elementary school. You get acclimated to middle school and how it works, but it’s fairly easy because you just got to middle school. But in seventh grade, it starts to pick up and get even more challenging. Since you are progressing through your middle school years, as you grow, the workload grows too. You have seven different classes to do work from, which is a lot already. Then, if the teacher wants to, you are assigned homework. No matter how lengthy the homework may be, it still takes time and effort to complete. Doing this for 10 months 7 hours a day 5 days a week with only 3 breaks and a few holidays off sprinkled throughout the year is very draining. The constant and continuous schedule of work every day causes students to lose motivation for school and burn out. But burning out isn’t what you think it is. From personal experience, burning out for me is having no motivation to complete any work. I don’t even want to get out of the bed in the morning to go to school. I’m not social anymore, even with my friends and family and mostly just spend time in my bed. After facing a burnout, what do you think a student’s grades would look like? This brings me to my next point.

One last thing middle school students have to face is mental health problems. From an outside perspective, middle school students are having the times of their lives inside the school. That’s not correct at all. Many adults try to use the excuse that since middle schoolers are young, they don’t have any type of problems. This is insanely incorrect. People of any age can have problems, the problem is that some adults think they know everything and are too ignorant to recognize the signs of bad mental health in children. For the reasons I listed before, this can put students in a bad state of mind. Social problems in school, grades and for some people, home life can have an affect on their mental health. This can also cause a burnout to be triggered. This means even less work being done and less participation. Many people try to hide their hurt by covering it up with a smiling face to seem okay. This is because some adults deny the fact they are hurting. Since some adults believe that young people can’t have problems, when a child reaches out for help, they get a selfish response like “You’re overreacting”, “You’re young you don’t have problems”, “I should be the one crying not you”, etc. A bad mental state can cause less school participation, grades dropping and a bad social life. What makes it worse is that those adults will tell you you’re lazy when your grades drop which really puts the nail in the coffin. This puts stress on you to be a better student, that it’s your fault you feel this way and that will ultimately make your problems worse.

So, being a middle schooler is not easy. The average middle schooler has probably experienced one of these things. Not everyone has it hard, but these are common situations that happen throughout the middle school experience, and if you haven’t experienced it consider yourself lucky. Instead of trying to understand what we go through, why not try to just help us get through it? Don’t invalidate, provide a safe space for students to come to you for their problems. And have an open mind, don’t think that middle schoolers have it easy because they don’t.