

If They Are Irritable All The Time, Is It A Mood Or A Way Of Life?

It is hard to see what middle schoolers have to be irritable about! At no other time of their lives will so many people be so concerned about them. Free room and board, more fancy toys than you had when you were a kid, no bills to pay, next to no meaningful responsibilities other than taking care of themselves.... and they cut plenty of corners just getting that accomplished! Somehow despite boundless energy to play they still find time for sleep marathons!

But with all this easy living come those awful mood swings. The raging hormones cause very real moods which can be physically draining, unpredictable in timing, volcanic in nature, or as cold and uninviting as a glacier.

There is one certainty about their moods you have no doubt noticed. Arguing with an irritable middle schooler is seldom productive!

After an argument about chores or homework, there is a real likelihood that neither of you enjoyed it. Yes, even your kid feels the same way. They do know that doing the work is a pretty standard expectation, and they should have taken care of it. They know that if the work had been performed you and they would both be happy. They are unaware of what the process was that derailed their train, and they don't know where their negative tone came from. If they lost the argument and now are acting like they hate you, what an awful feeling for them it is. Can you still remember those painful moments?

As the adult you can retain control by stating before the blow up gets out of hand, that a conversation about the concern will be happening later when tempers have cooled. By waiting for a better time you can deal with the problem and not the irritable mood. Your kid sees you are in charge, and you may have identified their mood for them which helps them to understand what they are feeling. When they are caught up in the moment, they can be unaware of how they are acting - the self awareness isn't in place yet. Next, give them a generous period of time to work through their emotions and then get the task accomplished.

“Before you watch the movie your room will be cleaned.” If they want to cut their losses, the desired behavior will happen pretty fast. If they need

to wallow in self induced misery or test your will, it may take awhile, but before they watch that movie, the room will be clean. Then comes the time for a short conversation about expectations for clean rooms that can be held during that happy moment when rewards are about to happen. This is much better than a lecture about how your standards will be lived up to before sending them off to grudgingly do a minimalist job just to aggravate you!

When reprimanding a moody kid, keep it simple! “The trash is still here and you need to carry it out now.” Keep the reprimand to the point and don’t use it as a launching pad for other issues. Resist the urge to add complaints about their selective hearing and poor work ethic!

Don’t let your middle schooler’s moods control yours. Tears, complaints about unfairness, sulking, grouchiness, rages, and exhaustion are all part of their world. From your world they need stability, refuge, and support.

It’s hard not to envy those living in Florida and California who can send their grumpsters outside to play for an hour all year round! But remember, the best way to teach your kids to act grumpy, argue and yell..... is to be grumpy, argue and yell!

As we conclude the year, please help students stay in compliance with the dress code. Although we are grateful spring is arriving, beach wear needs to stay home. Cameras are welcome on the last day of school but will be impounded for the day when in use before then. Squirt guns and ‘string’ spray cans are always a poor idea. Students whose behavior causes them to be sent from class to the ISS room twice in one day for time- out, will be kept in the ISS room for the remainder of the day once they arrive for their second visit.

Have a great summer!