



# **Middle School: The Inside Story: What Kids Tell Us, But Don't Tell You**

*Cynthia Ulrich Tobias , Sue Acuna*

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Remember middle school? Many parents would rather not. It's often a rough ride, filled with insecurity, peer pressure, awkwardness, and world-rocking change. This book provides practical, hands-on advice for helping your child through this minefield—with information about what he or she is really going through, but isn't likely to share.

Best-selling learning-styles expert Cynthia Tobias and veteran teacher Sue Acuña reveal what they've found by listening to kids when parents aren't around—and give you insider tips on how to bless your middle-schooler with success in class, at home, and in relationships. Topics include advice for keeping communication lines open, predictable physical and social issues, and solutions for problems like self-centeredness and over-the-top emotions.

## Middle School: The Inside Story: What Kids Tell Us, But Don't Tell You Details

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## **From Reader Review Middle School: The Inside Story: What Kids Tell Us, But Don't Tell You for online ebook**

### **Tanya says**

Teenage years are so important in our lives and yet they are so easy to forget. I personally do not remember much of anything in detail. "Middle School" is a great resource provided by the Focus on the Family. I really like their website: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com>

The book provides good advice on communicating with your middle schooler, adjusting to middle school and multiple teachers, coping with mood swings and attitude, understanding the world of a teenager and much more. There are many good examples and middle schoolers' quotations throughout the book. It really helps to peek into their life.

"Middle School" has a great layout. Every chapter has "Here's A Thought" bubble with suggestion for a real situation you can have with your teen. Also there are helpful check lists and charts that could serve as a great reference. They are easy to find.

I would highly recommend this book to any parent with young children.

P.S. I received this book for free from Tyndale House Publishers for review purposes.

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### **Heather Braoudakis says**

Everyone with a middle schooler/preteen/tween and everyone who will have one should have this book!! I am so excited about this book. We are always on a quest to equip ourselves to help our son through life and honesty, I know the middle school years can be a challenge. I remember it and I taught middle schoolers for a while. I appreciate the uniqueness of this book in that there is input from middle schoolers. I love that it covers communicating, independence and discipline, conflict, faith, school, romance and all the new challenges kids face like technology, Internet and gaming. I long for building and keeping a loving relationship with my son and I really resonate with this book!! I highly recommend it!!

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### **Kasey Cocoa says**

I found this book to be full of valuable insight and information. This is a great resource for those who interact with middle schoolers. Having raised two with a third facing middle school I can say this book will be well used and has given me a new way to understand what is going on and how to best help my child. Thank you to Tyndale publishers for offering a review copy in exchange for my honest opinion.

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### **Jerry Hillyer says**

Title: Middle School: The Inside Story

Authors: Cynthia Tobias & Sue Acuna

Cynthia Ulrich Tobias

Publisher: Tyndale

in association with Focus on the Family

Year: 2014

Pages: 208

[Disclaimer: I was provided with a free copy of this book by Tyndale Publishers in exchange for my fair and unbiased review. I was not provided with anything in exchange for my review. And as always, I promise to be perfectly honest about what I read.]

I will say upfront that I didn't like this book, but that doesn't mean it's not a good book for someone else. There is nothing inherently wrong with the book and there is nothing about the book that is unhelpful. I just didn't like it.

The book is divided into four parts: Changes, Parenting, Friends and Other Problems, and School. Each part is then subdivided into smaller parts dealing with issues under the general heading. So, under the section 'Changes' the authors deal with the strange dealings that come along with changes in the body as the child gets into his/her junior high years. The sections on Parenting and School are the longest sections with each having six sub-sections. The other two sections, Changes and Friends and Other problems, only have three sub-sections each which unbalances the book a little.

Throughout the book there are quotes from random middle school students who were interviewed by Sue Acuna, co-author of the book. I'm not really sure what to make of the quotes. It could be a case of these are genuine and fit nicely in with pre-determined chapters or it could be that they helped shape the content of the chapters. For me they were a distraction, mere fillers that acted as chicanes more than anything else. Periodically, too, there were brief anecdotes from the authors. These brief stories, mostly from their own families' or anonymous sources, again seemed to be perfectly fitted to the subject matter of the chapter--a fact I always find a little too convenient for my taste, but that's just me. I don't think the filler hurts the book but neither do I think it helps. I think it is filler that stretches a 75 page book to over 200 pages. (There is other stuff that I consider filler too. The only filler I appreciated was the 'Here's a Thought' text-boxes.)

The book is easy to read and it's not terribly deep. There's no doubt that it is filled with all sorts of helpful information that someone might well find beneficial. Nevertheless, I think even the authors would acknowledge that every family is different and has different needs and operates under a different dynamic. Thus we have to be careful when applying a template and suggesting that all things will work in all families. That being said, I don't think the authors of this book do that. Frankly, I think they manage to strike a very good balance between 'here are things that we have learned through our experience' and 'here are things you should do that will most certainly work for you.' They offer suggestions and helpful hints and ideas, but I think they manage to safely avoid dogma.

However.

I want to go back to those quotes that are laced throughout the book. These quotes are from 'a middle schooler.' We are not told the age or the sex of the student or the circumstance under which the quote was collected. What I found is that most of the quotes that are pulled out and put front and center are highly negative about parents. One would think, after reading a few of these quotes, that most parents are absolutely horrible people and that the only way to solve the issue is to get along with this program. I think that if middle school students are just learning how to be middle school students then perhaps their parents are also just learning to be parents of middle school students. Perhaps a few quotes from disoriented parents would have provided some balance to the book. Me and my wife have raised three sons through their rough junior high years. It was not easy because all three boys were different and had their own unique personality that we had to adapt to, but it did get easier with each boy.

Finally, I want to say this. I get that this is a popular level book written for a general audience (I suspect their audience is primarily moms, but I could be wrong) and that they want to get helpful information into as many hands as possible and that neither the authors nor the publishers want to bog people down with technicality, but 9 end notes? Really? Not even a bibliography or a 'here's where you can find more information' type page? With the exception of a couple of pages directing us to Focus on the Family stuff, a couple of references in the book to Tobias' other books, and a couple of references to Focus on the Family publications, we are simply left in the dark as to where all this information, helpful or otherwise, comes from. I think books that are designed to help us navigate such things as parenthood need to have a slightly more substantial research base than that of pull out quotes from 'a middle schooler.'

So, as I said at the beginning, there isn't anything necessarily wrong with the book. I just didn't like it. It is written from a female point of view (which again isn't wrong or bad), by two women who (according to their bios, have tons of practical experience). But I detect nothing in this book that would inspire another man to want to read it. I suspect stay at home mothers will enjoy this book and probably nod their way through in agreement. But I also think that if you are an adult, and you have happen to have any amount of common sense, you ought to be able to navigate your way through those strange middle school years without much help from this book.

3/5

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### **Daniel J. Cameron says**

This is a helpful book that gives a good, broad overview of important things to know as you work with middle schoolers. It seems more geared towards parents but has helpful information for those who just work with middle schoolers as well.

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### **Shannan Williams says**

This was the most perfect book about the truth behind the middle school years. It gives a look inside the minds of the age group; tells us what they are really thinking. This book gives all kinds of tips and information about raising kids in this age group. This is a must read for any parent or caregiver. This book is even appropriate to read with your middle school aged child.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is in the life of a middle schooler. It will really give you a

good insight into why they think and act the way they do. This book gets 5\*\*\*\*\* from me without a doubt.

I was given this book by Tyndale in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Virginia says**

This book is about middle school aged children and the changes they experience on their way to adulthood. It was written by two teachers who are familiar with this age group. There are many anonymous quotes from middle schoolers and tips from the authors about dealing with children of this age. I thought this book was well written and had many ideas about how to relate to a child.

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### **Christina says**

This is a great starting point for anyone beginning the journey of having a middle schooler. This book focuses on changes and how to handle them. I especially liked it for the communication tips. A lot of Cynthia Tobias's learning style material is incorporated in the last sections, which will be helpful if you have not read her other book on this topic.

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### **Rebecca says**

An approachable, easy-to-read book on what middle schoolers are thinking and feeling about school.

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### **Rachel Devaughn says**

Do you ever wonder what goes on in the mind of a middle schooler? Now you can find out!

This book couldn't have come at a better time and I love that it's put out by Focus on the Family!

I have a 12 year old who is starting 7th grade this month and I am always looking for good ways to communicate with him and ways to strengthen his faith and character.

There are 4 parts to this book-Changes, Parenting, Friends and other problems, and School.

I had to laugh at the first story shared in the book about the difference between a middle school age child and elementary school aged child, because I have that exact situation at home with my two boys!

This book was filled with great suggestions and used alot of quotes and feelings from middle schoolers.

I learned some better ways of communicating to my son about his body changes and to be more sympathetic to his clumsiness and emotions.

I also loved the communication NO NO list of 10 common mistakes parents make in talking to their kids.

GREAT list!!

There is also a great chapter about responding to red flags which addresses some serious issues like eating disorders, bullying, depression, etc.

This was a great book to read and I would recommend it to all parents who have children close to this age, or middle school age.

I am going to do as the book suggests and ask my son to read it too and see what he thinks about it.

Good luck to all you parents out there!

I received this book complimentary for blog review from Tyndale House Publishers. All opinions are my own.

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## **Laura Langley says**

Parents on the verge of the middle school years will find in Cynthia Tobias and Sue Acuña's new book, *Middle School: The Inside Story*, the help and hope they need to make it through those roller coaster years with early teens.

*Middle School: The Inside Story* is organized into four sections: Changes, Parenting, Friends and Other Problems, and School. Throughout the book, Tobias and Acuña help parents understand what goes on in middle school minds, how teens deal with all the changes, and how to parent during these turbulent years. Some of the best advice in the book comes early on when the authors say, "These are critical years; teens who don't have good relationships with their parents during middle school are going to have a very tough time in high school, when it's almost too late to establish the trust and rapport necessary to stay connected."

Additionally, the authors help parents understand that the middle school years signal the start of the detachment process in which parents slowly begin to let go and release teens to more and more responsibility as the years go by—all in preparation for young adulthood. Tobias and Acuña suggest that parents take on the role of consultant rather than manager, steering their teens toward wise decisions with good questions and gentle suggestions as well as natural consequences for irresponsibility and not-so-good decisions.

Scattered throughout the book, readers find testimonies and quotes from teens and parents as well as teachers, giving accurate pictures of various stages and issues. These enhance the reader's understanding and sensitivity for dealing with their own teens.

I also appreciate the numerous lists and charts throughout the book that help readers more easily digest so many facts and ideas. For example, chapter three highlights a list of middle schoolers' common fears—both hidden and unhidden. Chapter four includes a chart of a middle schooler's basic needs. In chapter seven, there's an oh-so-helpful "no-no" list for communication with early teens. Reasonable expectations for chores are outlined in chapter eight. And, in chapter sixteen, parents find a quick list of learning style characteristics.

All in all, *Middle School: The Inside Story* is an easy-to-read but highly relevant book, filled with helpful information. If you're looking for a book to help you navigate the middle school years with a teen in your life, this book is just what you need. My husband is a youth minister and plans to recommend the book to parents of middle schoolers in our church and community.

## **About the Authors**

Cynthia Ulrich Tobias is founder and CEO of Apple St. (Applied Learning Styles) and the best-selling author of 11 books, including *The way They Learn* and *Every Child Can Succeed*.

Sue Acuña has loved being a middle school teacher for over 20 years—and her students openly and honestly share their world with her every day.

\* Note: I received a copy of the book from Tyndale Blog Network for this honest review. However, the opinions expressed are my own.

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### **Tanya says**

Basically can sum the parenting response to the problems their middle schoolers will face as, "be prepared to be an advisor." In each scenario, it encourages the parent to allow the child to come up with some strategies for what will work for him or her, taking into account the need to understand one's personal style and preferences. It has good suggestions for specific dialog from the parent's vantage, but underscores the need for respect and the opportunities to figure it out for oneself while being reassured and listened to and offered advice only if requested (though it is okay to ask if advice is wanted). For someone whose child is going into middle school this book is helpful, but for one already there it may not be quite as useful.

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### **Heather King says**

I just finished school supply shopping for my oldest daughter as she preps for fourth grade and it hit me all over again how quickly our little ones grow. It won't be long before she is heading into middle school, so I figured I'd get a head start on parental preparation and read *Middle School: The Inside Story*. Those middle school years were certainly my toughest time growing up and I'd like to ease that stress on my daughter (and on me!!) as much as possible.

In this book, Cynthia Tobias and Sue Acuna share quotes from conversations they had with middle schoolers so you can hear their perspective on all things tween and teen. They divide the chapters into sections on Changes (emotional, physical, etc.); Parenting issues (how to discipline, handling technology); Friends and Other Problems (like middle school dating); School (keeping up with homework, teaching more personal responsibility, working with teachers, and learning styles).

It's an easy and insightful read with insider information about what middle schoolers are going through and what they wish parents knew but don't always verbalize to us. I sometimes wished the authors would tackle more in-depth discussions within this book. It seemed like they were often referring us to other books as resources (For more information on this, you can read.....). Maybe a list of resources at the end would be helpful, but I'd prefer to have one go-to resource rather than one book that refers me to read several other books.

For me, though, the book reminded me of what it was like to be a middle schooler and maybe that's what I really needed as a mom. I need to remember so I can parent my own up-and-coming tween/teen better.

I received this book free from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review and the opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

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### **Robert Eby says**

**Fantastic book, remarkably good and easy read.**



Spectacular book with lots of insightful ideas. Really enjoyable to read, learned a lot. I will refer to this again and again.

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## **Cynthia Marcano says**

### **Why I Chose This Book...**

So my daughter is 10 years old and is entering the fifth grade in September. She is entering Middle School (Dun Dun Dun)! She is excited and I am freaking out!!! Things are just different in middle school. Hormones and feelings come into play, as well as more independence. I am not quite ready, but I doubt I would ever be. So I found saw this book and a light clicked. I hadn't even thought to read about how to deal with this upcoming journey that will effect not just my daughter but our family life as a whole. I know its not what I typically review, BUT I know that there are many of you out there are probably experiencing what I am and I wanted to share this with you all.

### **What I Loved...**

First and foremost that this book was written from a Christian perspective. I am always leery of advice that is not rooted in biblical principles.

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