

ASK P&C

MEDIA MESSAGES: *It seems so many kids' TV shows and movies deliver messages to young girls to grow up quickly. I feel my 9-year-old is already under pressure to be "mature." How can I protect her?*

—Laney L., Cedar Rapids, IA

ON AVERAGE, tweens absorb 38 hours a week of media, including computer, video games, TV, radio, and print. Setting limits on how much time your child spends with media is one way to reduce negative exposure. But helping your daughter learn to filter it and to make her own judgments is equally important.

Ask questions. Watch a typical age-appropriate TV show together. Help her notice the stereotypes girls deal with. Instead of preaching, open up a conversation.

Share your values. Use subtler ideas in the storylines to start conversations. For example, say, "I notice that [the character] is going on a date, and she's 14. What do you think about that?" Such discussions provide opportunities to learn what your daughter understands about these complex issues.

MOM VS. DAD: *My husband and I disagree about the best way to discipline our children. They often go to him after I say no, because they know he may overrule my decision. How can I get us on the same page?*

—Sarah M., Broomfield, CO

MOST FAMILIES wrestle with differences in parenting styles, at least

Developmental psychology expert Michelle Anthony answers your questions about your child's social, emotional, and behavioral development at home and in school. **THIS MONTH:** media messages for girls, discipline dilemma, and taming the morning rush



some of the time. But if you find yourself at odds with your spouse's style, and you notice that it affects how your children interact with one or both of you, it's time to have a conversation with your husband.

Agree to disagree. Acknowledge that there will be times when you will not see eye to eye. But agree that the parent who feels most strongly about the issue or consequence will be unequivocally supported by the other.

Speak privately. When a disagreement about

discipline arises, talk about it out of your children's earshot.

Back each other up. Even if you would have done things differently, agree that when one parent gives a consequence, the other will support it. Once your children discover that a "no" from Mom will be backed up by a "no" from Dad as well, they'll most likely stop trying to play you off each other.

MICHELLE ANTHONY, M.A., PH.D., is an expert in developmental psychology, a certified K-3 teacher, and co-author of *Little Girls Can Be Mean: Four Steps to Bullyproof Girls in the Early Grades*.

SUNRISE CHAOS: *Mornings at our house are the pits. The kids never want to get out of bed and when they do, they dawdle over every little thing. I'm constantly having to nag and shout to get them out the door on time. Help!*

—Carol S., Fairborn, OH

NEEDING TO get up and out quickly causes many families to start the day more stressed than need be. Some tips to make the morning more seamless:

Use "when/then" incentives. Rather than say "no," or scold, use their own desires to motivate them. For example, say, "When you have brushed your teeth, gotten your shoes, and organized your backpack, then you can sit and pet the dog."

Be specific. Avoid giving overgeneralized commands like "Get ready." For some children, specific directions such as, "Brush your hair and then get your coat," or a list they can check off along the way is more effective.

Check in with yourself. Are you guilty of saying, "It's time to go," and then finishing off just one more e-mail? Children learn what they live, so be sure you mean it when you say it's time to leave. **P&C**



Have a question you'd like P&C to answer? E-mail it to AskPC@scholastic.com.