

## Let the Children Come...

This is the fourth of a six-part series that has gained national and international recognition for its practical nature and common sense advice for today's parents. Along the Middle-Years Way provides clear strategies to meet the changing needs of your eight to twelve year old child. Middle Years children go through a number of transitions as they move away from childhood structures and move towards those all-important adolescent years. Your children will no longer communicate the same way as they did previously. Relationships with peers will begin to change. What the group thinks becomes important and members of the opposite sex will start to become attractive. In short, your child is changing and maturing. How prepared are you for this critical period of life?

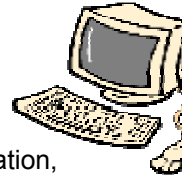
### About the Ezzos

*Gary Ezzo M.A., serves as the Executive Director of Growing Families International. He is a graduate of Biola University School of Theology and served ten years as Pastor to Family Ministries in Sun Valley, California. Anne Marie Ezzo R.N., has a background in pediatric nursing and is a childbirth instructor. She is a co-founder of Christian Childbirth Education and co-author of Birth by Design.*



Gary & Anne Marie have six grandchildren and reside in Mt Pleasant, South Carolina, USA.

For more information visit the Growing Families Australia website at... [www.gfi.org.au](http://www.gfi.org.au)



This site explains the history and goals of the Growing Families organisation, news and resources available, with on-line ordering. Contact the GFA representative in your state via the website or phone the National Office for number.

### Growing Families Australia

PO Box 824, Happy Valley,  
South Australia. 5159  
Phone/Fax: 08 8322 3770  
Email: [enquiries@gfi.org.au](mailto:enquiries@gfi.org.au)

*The details of your local AMYW program are:*

## Let The *Children* Come... Along The Middle Years Way



### Preparation for Adolescence

Gary & Anne Marie Ezzo

Parenting your  
Child from  
Eight to  
Twelve Years



# Along the Middle Years Way

Rightly meeting the small challenges of the middle years reduces the likelihood of big challenges in the teen years. The period between eight to twelve years of age finds children in three major transitions — moral, biological, and social. Each transition brings its own set of adjustments, conflicts, and changes. Yes, changes. Your children are growing up and that means you must grow with them.

The middle years awaken within a child a sense of fearful adventure in an ever-expanding world outside the security and confines of Mom and Dad.

It is the first phase in the transition from dependence on parents to the self-reliance of adulthood. Therefore, this transition must be accompanied by patience, understand-



ing, and plenty of parental faith in the belief that He who has begun a good work in you will continue it in your children.

**Session 1: Welcome Back:** The middle years is a time of realignment and sometimes course correction for children and parents. These are transition years when children of age start the long process of metamorphosis — moving away from childhood dependencies and interests, and moving toward healthy independence and self-responsibility.

**The Invisible Role of Authority:** Discipline is a process of training and learning. It comes from the word ‘disciple’ — one who is a learner. Children are not endowed at birth with self-control, nor is your young child experienced enough in life to know how to morally discipline himself. Parents fulfill that role as teachers, while children are disciples who learn from them a way of life. The learning process requires the use of parental authority.

**Session 2: Just Ahead: Adolescence and Maturity:** For every human adult, there was a period of eight or nine years when that person was no longer a child but not yet an adult. Adolescence is the term used to designate this in-between period of life. The word is derived from the Latin verb ‘adolescere’, which means to ripen or to grow into maturity. Adolescence is the period of growth when the characteristics of childhood are gradually exchanged for those of adulthood — a time when a child is not firmly established in either category.

**Understanding Moral Maturity:** In a biblical context, moral maturity should show itself between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. Too often, parents of pre-adolescents misjudge the timing. They view adolescence as the period of moral ripening and not the time of moral living. Be warned, the pre-



adolescence middle years are the last stop before moral patterns are lived out. Have you reached the heart of your child with the truth of God’s Word? Are they learning the “one-anothers” of Scripture and applying them to their own lives and family members?

**Session 3: Influences on Behaviour:** Over the next two chapters our discussion will centre on the three primary influences that shape your preteen’s world. First, there is the moral influence. Specifically we are referring to the quality of your child’s moral understanding and commitment to family values. What is in your child’s heart? Second, there are biological influences, which begin with puberty and end with maturity. Because of the influence of hormones, your child now views himself and others differently, especially the “others” of the opposite sex.

**The Power of Groupthink:** The middle years is a time when a child moves from an awakening to a full awareness of the significance of the group’s opinion. That is what brings about age-related peer pressure. The child from a distance wants to know, “What does the group think?” Closer up, he wants to know, ‘What does the group think of me?’

**Session 4: Communication and Conversation:** Being skilled in communication techniques does not guarantee family harmony or healthy relationships. Communication skills are not a substitute for values. What holds families together is the moral unity found within the soul of the family. Moral intimacy among family members has no substitute, no backup, no replacement.

**Session 5: How to Encourage:** There are a number of ways to encourage your middle years child. Verbal praise,



physical touch, simple gifts, spending time together, acts of service — each expression of love sends the message that we notice what our kids do, and that we care about them. But encouragement doesn’t just happen.

**Discipline Potpourri:** There seems to be a prevailing assumption that if parents can master better methods of punishment, whether it be for a preschooler or an adolescent, they will solve their parent-teen conflicts. Surely punishment plays a role in child training, but in the teen years it plays a greatly diminished role.

**Session 6: Seven Warning Flags:** In middle years parenting, there are certain red flags to look out for. They are signaling that something is happening below the visible water line of your child’s life. To ignore these warnings can lead to troublesome years ahead.

Each weekly session meeting is approx. 2 hours.