

a tween talk workbook



THE CONNECTION RESET:

STOP THE DAILY SCHOOLWORK BATTLE
AND GET YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER BACK

BY MARINA JOY



HELLO THERE,

A quick note from Marina:

I'm Marina Joy—homeschool mom of 11 years and founder of The Middle School on Track System™. I homeschooled three daughters with three very different personalities through middle school, and none of this came naturally to me.

I learned through trial and error (lots of error). I'm sharing what I learned so you don't have to waste those precious middle school years making the same mistakes I did.

My daughters are now young adults who still talk to me, seek my input, and genuinely enjoy our family. The Connection Reset is how we got here.

Let's get started.

WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW

Before we dive in, let's get honest about what's happening in your house. And let me say this up front: Whatever you write here—it's normal. You're not alone. And it doesn't mean you're failing.

Middle school is hard for everyone. Even people who make it look easy are struggling behind the scenes.

The daily battle looks like this:

By _____ am, I've already reminded my middle schooler to start school _____ times.

The phrase I hear most often is:

The phrase I say most often is:

How I'm currently responding to resistance: (check all that apply)

- Reminding repeatedly
 - Taking away privileges (phone, screen time, etc.)
 - Lecturing about responsibility
 - Bribing/rewarding
 - Getting frustrated and raising my voice
 - Giving up and letting it slide
 - Other: _____

The cost of the daily battle:

The relationship is suffering because:

I feel: (circle all that apply)

Exhausted | Frustrated | Dismissed | Like I'm failing | Alone | Confused | Worried

What I want instead:

WHY MIDDLE SCHOOL IS DIFFERENT

Between ages 11-14, your child's brain is undergoing massive reconstruction. The prefrontal cortex (responsible for planning, impulse control, and decision-making) won't be fully developed until their mid-20s.

They're not being difficult on purpose. Their brain literally can't do what it will be able to do a few years from now.

They're individuating—separating their identity from yours. This is healthy. This is necessary. This is supposed to happen. But it means what worked in elementary school won't work anymore.

FILL IN THE BLANKS:

Elementary school: My middle schooler used to
_____ because I said so.

Middle school: Now when I tell them to do something, they

The shift that's happening:

Middle schoolers are individuating which means:

What worked before but doesn't work now:

RESISTANCE IS INFORMATION

When my middle schooler resists, they might be saying:

- I'm overwhelmed
- I don't understand
- I don't see the point
- I feel managed, not heard
- I need more autonomy
- Something else: _____

The real problem isn't: _____

The real problem is: _____



THE CONNECTION RESET FRAMEWORK

SECTION 1 - The 4 Steps:

Step 1: Notice out loud

Fill in the blank: "I notice _____"

Step 2: Get curious

Ask: "_____?"

Step 3: When they say "I don't know"

Don't: _____

Do: Repeat their words: "_____ " [pause, wait]

Step 4: Keep reflecting

Meet emotion with _____

Meet logic with _____

_____ before solving



THE CONNECTION RESET FRAMEWORK

SECTION 2 - The 5:1 Rule:

In the Connection Reset, my middle schooler should be talking _____ times more than me.

My job IS to:

- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____

My job is NOT to:

- X _____
- X _____
- X _____
- X _____

The magic happens in: _____

Why this matters:

When I talk more than they do → I'm solving _____ version of the problem.

When they talk more than I do → I'm solving _____ actual problem.



SCENARIO 1: THE SHUTDOWN

"I don't want to do school today. It's boring."

SECTION 1 - What I normally say/do:

SECTION 2 - Using the Connection Reset instead:

Step 1 - Notice: "I notice _____"

Step 2 - Get curious: "_____?"

Step 3 - When they say "I don't know":

Repeat: "_____ " [pause, wait]

Remember the 5:1 rule - let THEM talk.

SECTION 3 - What this might reveal:

The real issue isn't boredom. It might be:

- Need for relevance/meaning
- Need for autonomy
- Something else bothering them
- Other: _____

YOUR SITUATION

Think about the last time your middle schooler said something was "boring."

What did they say?

What did you say/do?

Looking back, what do you think they were really saying?

If you could redo that conversation using the Connection Reset, what would you say?

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3 (after "I don't know"):



SCENARIO 2: THE OVERWHELM

"This is too much."

SECTION 1 - What I normally say/do:

SECTION 2 - Using the Connection Reset instead:

Step 1 - Notice: "I see _____"

Step 2 - Get curious: "What _____?"

Step 3 - When they say "I don't know, it just is":

Repeat: " _____ " [pause, wait]

Remember the 5:1 rule - let THEM talk.

SECTION 3 - What this might reveal:

The real issue isn't defiance. It might be:

- They don't know how to break tasks into steps
- They're confused about instructions
- They're perfectionists and afraid to start
- Other: _____

YOUR SITUATION

Think about a time your middle schooler seemed overwhelmed.

What was happening?

What did you think was the problem?

Looking back, what might have been really going on underneath?



SCENARIO 3: THE DEFLECTION

"Why do I even need to know this?"

SECTION 1 - What I normally say/do:

SECTION 2 - Using the Connection Reset instead:

Step 1 - Validate "You're wondering _____"

Step 2 - Get curious: "What _____?"

Step 3 - When they say "I don't know, just seems pointless":

Repeat: " _____ " [pause, wait]

Remember the 5:1 rule - let THEM explore.

SECTION 3 - What this might reveal:

The real issue isn't disrespect. It might be:

- Need for autonomy/input on curriculum
- Work doesn't match their level
- Questioning as part of individuation
- Other: _____

YOUR SITUATION

What does your middle schooler question most?

What might they really be asking for underneath that question?



SCENARIO 4: THE COMPARISON

"My friend doesn't have to do this much work. Why do I?"

SECTION 1 - What I normally say/do:

SECTION 2 - Using the Connection Reset instead:

Step 1 - Notice: "Sounds like _____"

Step 2 - Get curious: "What _____?"

Step 3 - When they say "I don't know, she just doesn't have to do all this":

Repeat: " _____ " [pause, wait]

Remember the 5:1 rule - let THEM explore.

SECTION 3 - What this might reveal:

The real issue isn't about the friend. It might be:

- Need for autonomy/ownership
 - Feeling micromanaged
 - Actually doing too much
 - Other: _____
-

YOUR SITUATION

When has your middle schooler compared themselves to others?

What were they really asking for?



HANDLING "I DON'T KNOW"

Most conversations die at "I don't know."

SECTION 1 - What I usually do when my middle schooler says "I don't know": (check all that apply)

- Give up ("Fine, whatever")
- Fill the silence with suggestions
- Get frustrated
- Impose a consequence
- Other: _____

SECTION 2 - Here's what to do instead:

Step 1: Repeat their words with curiosity: "_____"

Step 2: Wait - Count to _____ in your head if you need to

Step 3: Trust the pause - They're _____, not stonewalling

Step 4: Keep the 5:1 ration - Let _____ fill the space

Remember the 5:1 rule - let THEM explore.

WHY THIS WORKS

**"I don't know" doesn't mean the conversation is over.
It means:**

SECTION 3 - Practice

Next time my middle schooler says "I don't know," I will:

YOUR BIGGEST AHA

You've just gone through 4 scenarios. And chances are, you saw yourself in at least one of them.

Whatever you discovered about what's really driving resistance in your house — you're not the first mom to face this. And the fact that you're here, doing this work, means you're exactly the kind of parent your middle schooler needs.

Reflection:

As you've gone through these scenarios, what's your biggest realization about what's really driving resistance in your house?

What have you been treating as the problem that's actually just a symptom?

What's the real problem underneath?

YOUR WAY FORWARD

One thing I'm going to do differently this week:

The scenario I'm most likely to face:

How I'll use the Connection Reset when it happens:

Step 1 - Notice:

Step 2 - Get curious:

Step 3 - After "I don't know":

Step 4 - What I hope to discover:

CONNECTION RESET TRACKER

DAY	WHAT HAPPENED?	WHAT I NOTICED / ASKED	WHAT I DISCOVERED	WHAT SHIFTED
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				
SUNDAY				

At the end of the week, reflect:

What surprised me:

What patterns I'm noticing:

What I still need help with:

WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER

When you use the Connection Reset this week, some issues will resolve immediately.

Your middle schooler just needed to feel heard, understood, and like they have some autonomy.

But you'll also discover deeper issues:

- They're disorganized and don't know how to plan their work
- They lack follow-through and need systems
- They need help with time management
- They need help prioritizing
- They need help breaking big tasks into small steps

Connection opens the door.
But then you need tools for the next level.
That's what we're tackling in March.

WHAT'S NEXT

March Workshop:

How to Help Your Middle Schooler Get Organized Without Taking Over

Once they're talking to you, they need systems that actually work.

Register now:

- ✓ FREE when you attend live
- ✓ Workbook included for live attendees
- ✓ Free 48-hour replay if you can't make it

48-hour special pricing (if you miss it live):

Workbook only: \$7 (reg. \$17)

Replay + workbook: \$17 (reg. \$27)

REGISTER AT: tweentalk.co/workshop-march