



By Gregory Ramey, PhD, child psychologist at Dayton Children's and *Dayton Daily News* columnist

Questions from readers

Question:

I dread this time of the year, as school work is a constant battle with my daughter. She is now in fourth grade and homework takes her two to three hours every night. This is a stress not only for her but a disruption for the entire family. Isn't that amount of work excessive in fourth grade?

Answer:

Arrange a meeting with the teacher and your daughter. I suspect the reason your daughter is spending so much time on her homework is because her work is not getting done at school. She also may have some significant organizational issues, attention deficits or perhaps some learning problems.

Be careful that you create an environment at home that is conducive to the work getting done. Develop a homework routine. After a short break, school work gets done before youngsters are allowed to play outside, watch TV or get involved in other activities. While you should occasionally review her work, be sure that your daughter's homework gets completed by her not by you.

Question:

My 7-year-old came back from a visit with his dad and asked me why he can do things there that he can't do at home (e.g., stay up late, watch certain videos and eat certain types of food). I have an excellent relationship with my ex and I don't want to say or do anything that will cause problems. I disagree with my ex on these issues but I don't want to say that to my son.

Answer:

You can be honest with your son without criticizing your ex-husband. How about trying something as simple as this?

“Grownups sometimes have different opinions on raising kids. Families may have different rules about bedtime, television and chores. I do things here that I think are best for you. Your dad is doing the same thing in his house. I know this might be a little confusing for you but you’ll need to learn that there are different rules in different homes. Just like different teachers may have different classroom rules, you have two parents that have different opinions about what they think is best for you.”

Question:

I disagree strongly with your comment that kids in elementary school don’t need cell phones. My second grader can easily use a cell phone and I feel much safer knowing that I can connect with her at any time. What’s the big deal?

Answer:

It’s great that a cell phone is working for your family but I stand by my comment that they are unnecessary for young kids. Cell phones have as many risks as they do benefits. There can be problems with excessive phone calls, texting and a generation of kids that are becoming too dependent on their parents.

Gregory Ramey, Ph.D., is a child psychologist and vice president for outpatient services at The Children’s Medical Center of Dayton. For more of his columns, visit www.childrensdayton.org/ramey.