



Managing Anxiety

Parent - Family Newsletter



April 2012

4 Strategies for Dealing With School-Related Stress

Whether your child is bringing home a test or report card, trying out for the team or the school play, every parent hopes for success. No parent wants to see his or her child have to deal with failure. But an expectation to succeed at every pursuit can cause undue stress and anxiety for children.

"All kids, even the most successful students, spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with negative emotions about school," says Emily Coe, Ph.D.,

director of behavioral health at HealthTeacher.

While low levels of stress can motivate students to study, practice and perform well, numerous studies have shown that higher levels of stress can negatively affect students' ability to learn, think clearly and do their best work. As a parent, you can help your child to avoid a stressful school experience. Take a look at these four strategies for helping your child deal with normal school-related anxiety.



1. Have a discussion about failure.

Education research shows that learning how to fail—and pick yourself up again—is an important part of building character and learning to lead a successful life. Rather than showing only disappointment when your child fails a test or doesn't meet the standard he'd hoped to meet, talk about what he can learn from this experience and how it can inform his behavior next time. Explain how your life as an adult also includes small failures; nobody excels all the time at everything. "Some studies show that kids who never fail never learn resilience either," Coe says.





This newsletter is brought to you by Arkansas Children's Hospital and HealthTeacher. HealthTeacher is the leading provider of K-12 Health Curriculum online. For more information, please visit us at www.healthteacher.com/arkansas.

Disclaimer: Photos in this newsletter being used for illustrative purposes only. Any person depicted in the photos is a model.

Just Breathe

If your child has difficulty staying on task, shows hints of a lower self-image or exhibits disruptive behavior, ask his teacher to incorporate deep breathing exercises into the classroom to help him be more focused, attentive and cooperative. HealthTeacher's Deep Breathing App, available at www.healthteacher.com/breathe, leads students through deep-breathing techniques that are medically based, relaxing and have protective and restorative effects for many stress and anxiety-related conditions.

2. Set realistic expectations. While perfection is worth aiming for, keep in mind it is rarely achieved. Rather than making your kids feel pressured to perform perfectly in every endeavor, adjust your expectations to be more manageable. Communicate clearly what you expect, and make sure your child understands how to reach that goal. For instance, if you expect only A's and B's on the report card, discuss with your child the discipline and study habits required to earn those grades.

3. Manage negative emotions. Almost every child will fail a test or receive an unacceptable report card at some point, and some children will react with extreme emotions such as anger, fear and self-loathing. Help your child deal with these emotions by helping him or her understand that it's normal to feel disappointed and upset, but explain that failure on a test doesn't constitute failure as a student or a person. Ask your student to think about all her other successes, academic or otherwise, and the steps she took to achieve those. Talk about what steps he or she can take to correct the current disappointment.

4. Monitor your family schedule. Just as an overbooked schedule can cause stress for you at work, constant activity and a packed schedule create stress and anxiety for children as well. Rather than booking an educational activity or an extracurricular pursuit every free afternoon or evening, leave some time in your family's schedule to just hang out, relax and let kids choose how to spend their spare time. "Don't forget to let kids be kids," Coe says.

