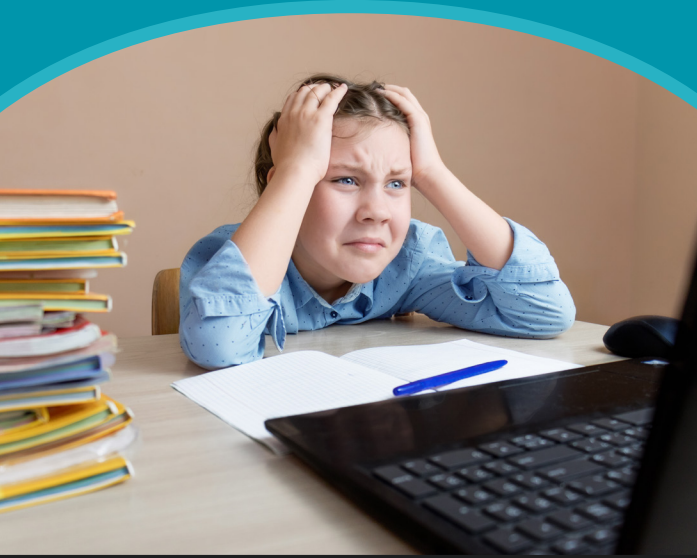


# Is Your Child Under *Too Much* Pressure?



**A** little pressure can be a good thing. It can help us meet deadlines. It can force us to get organized. It can give us the boost we need to do our best.

But too much stress can be harmful. Today's children face different pressures from those of any other generation—and they need help dealing with them.

Here are some ideas for creating a family atmosphere that will help you examine and reduce the stresses that your child may be facing.

**QuickTips**

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## Are You Putting Too Much Pressure On Your Child?

**W**hen asked about their biggest worries, students name the intense pressure to do well in school and in sports.

To see if you're putting too much pressure on your child, consider these questions:

- **What happens when your child** brings home a test? Do you first talk about the questions she got *wrong*? Or do you look for what she got *right*?
- **Do most of your conversations** with your child focus on the things she hasn't finished? ("You still haven't cleaned your room!" "You forgot to feed the dog.") Or do you try to say something positive as often as possible?
- **When you watch your child** in an athletic event, do you criticize her performance afterwards? Or do you try to focus on the *fun* of playing the game?

## Teach Your Child the Difference Between 'Doing Your Best' and 'Being the Best'

**I**t becomes unhealthy when children try to meet unrealistic expectations. That's why it's important to emphasize *doing* their best rather than *being* the best.

It's also important to remind your child that no one can be the best at everything. Let him know that you love him because of who he is—not because of what he does.

## Setting Priorities

**T**rying to do too much can be a major cause of stress. Learning to set priorities is one of the best ways that children can deal with the stress in their lives.

If your child has trouble using time wisely, have him make a list of everything he wants to do. Then help him set priorities. What's most important? Have him post his list and check off completed tasks.

## What If Your Child Has A Special Talent?

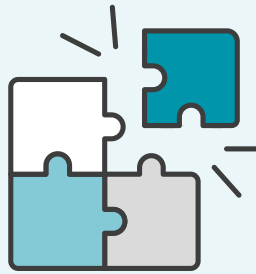
**S**ome children have gifts—as artists, athletes or students—that appear very early. Parents can help develop these talents—while still keeping school and family life in balance. Here are some suggestions:

- **Don't let your child** develop one talent at the expense of his overall education.
- **Encourage** a disciplined, organized lifestyle. Practice should be part of the regular family routine—but so should chores and time for reading.
- **Let your child** set the pace. Provide opportunities—but don't take over.

# Help Your Child Relieve Stress

All children experience stress, and competitive children are especially vulnerable. If you have a competitive child, teach her some healthy ways to reduce the stress in her life. Here are some suggestions:

- **Turn problems into challenges.** If your child is feeling stress because of a major project that is due in school, help her break it down into smaller chunks—and celebrate her success in completing each section.
- **Help your child learn from a disappointment.** Along the way, perhaps she made some new friends. Perhaps she learned that she needs to begin her science project sooner than the night before it's due!
- **Teach your child to play by the rules.** Telling children that “winning is everything” creates unhealthy stress—and unhealthy values. What really matters is how you play the game.
- **Make sure your child does some things just for fun.** If she's getting too stressed out before a big test, watch a funny movie and relax for an hour or so. The laugh may do her more good than another hour of studying.



- **Encourage your child to exercise regularly.** One of the best ways to relieve stress and tension is through physical activity.
- **Be a good role model.** The way you handle stress shows your child how to cope. If you turn to alcohol or other substances, your child may be more likely to try those things, too.
- **Listen.** Sometimes, your understanding ear may be all it takes to get your child through a rough time.
- **Make sure your child gets enough sleep.** It's even more difficult for exhausted kids to handle stress.

ZZZ

A blue thought bubble with three white 'Z's inside, indicating sleep. The bubble is connected to the text above by a thin line and has two smaller blue circles below it.

## There's No Place Like Home!

When children are under too much pressure, experts say the place to start to get it under control is right at home. Make sure you are not the source of unhealthy pressure. Teach your child how to set priorities and how to keep strengths and weaknesses in perspective. Most importantly, show your child by your own example how to handle the normal challenges of daily life in positive ways.



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One of a series of QuickTips® from The Parent Institute®  
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