Perfectionism and Academic Risk-Taking in Advanced Learners

Community Conversations on Teen Stress:
Fostering Wellness and Resiliency
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Objectives

Reflection
Needs of the gifted learner
Communication styles
Signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety or depression
Research
Whole child balance
Questions and comments
Reflection

How would your child answer these questions?

My biggest worry is...
My greatest accomplishment is...
I am sad when...
I am stressed when....
I am happiest when...

What are my child’s needs?
WHOLE CHILD APPROACH TO LEARNING

Healthy Child

- Personal
- Academic
- Emotional
- Social
How does my child cope in the academic environment?

- Gifted children require unique learning environments and differentiated instruction to keep them engaged.
- They may experience sensitivity to the expectations of others or self.
- They may hide their own abilities or underachieve due to their social environment.
- They may choose older peers or experience social isolation due to cognitive differences.
- Can usually cope and problem-solve well and are resilient due to intellectual ability.
Unhealthy coping strategies

- Substance Abuse
- Apathy
- Procrastination
- Frequent Illness
- Overachievement
- Underachievement
- Eating Disorder
Why does perfectionism seem to be a problem for gifted children?

- Perfectionism is very close to excellence
- Parents reward and praise excellence
- World expects perfection
- Many gifted children can go for long periods of time without making a mistake
- Sometimes lead to fear of making mistakes or a less than perfect performance
- May become debilitating and child will not want to perform
Different Types of Perfectionism

- Child may be perfectionistic in one area
- Perfectionism can become pervasive and compulsive
- Striving for excellence is positive and appropriate
- Perfectionism is problematic
- Society has a love/hate with perfectionism
Perfectionism: Social or Emotional?

- Both!
- When it interferes with productive achievement and a happy lifestyle
- When it become extreme
- All or nothing perspective
- Encourage a delicate balance of encouraging excellence while preventing perfectionism
How can parents and teachers best deal with a child’s perfectionism?

- Praise moderately most of the time. Calling a child a good thinker rather than smart, brilliant, natural athlete.
- Help kids feel satisfied with their best rather than compare to others.
- Read biographies together that show successful people making mistakes and experiencing failure.
- Help children learn to laugh at themselves and their own mistakes. Model this by laughing at your own mistakes.
Perfectionism in Boys and Girls

- Girls more perfectionist than boys
- Study showed that more than a third of woman remembered themselves being perfectionists as teens
- Perfectionist boys involved in sports learn to make mistakes and still help their teams
- Encouraging kids to participate in activities they enjoy without being the best can help children appreciate themselves without pressure
Communication

The Daily:
How was your day today?
What is your homework or do you have homework?

Recommend:
Would you like to take a walk with me?
Who did you eat with today?
What are you looking forward to this week?
What are you dreading this week?
Two-way Communication

How are you partnering with your child for decision-making or academic learning?

Always be sure to get your child’s input on academic or personal decisions that will directly impact them. It’s important for them to feel important and that their input matters to you.

Example: I would like you to apply to VT for college.
Recommended: Have you given any thought to colleges you’d like to visit or apply? I was thinking VT may be a good fit for you.

Example: You will be taking Honors Algebra 1 next year.
Recommended: Do you think you would like to challenge yourself in Math next year with Honors Math next year?
Signs and Symptoms of Stress, Anxiety, or Depression

- Sudden changes in behavior or patterns
- Talk of harming self or others
- Know who your child’s friends are
- Apathy (you can’t fail if you don’t try)
- Lack of appetite
- Sleeplessness
- Avoidance of activities
- Eating disorders
- Continuous stomach and/or head aches
In counseling we teach children:
- To learn from mistakes
- Set reasonable expectations of themselves and others
- Develop personal relaxation strategies
- Develop balance in their life
- May need to address depression and/or eating disorders
If I avoid the situation, I make it more scary than it really is. I have to face my fear to make it smaller.
1. What's the worst that could happen?
2. How likely is it to happen?
3. If it happened how would I deal with it?
NO FEELING LASTS FOREVER.
This feeling will end.
it’s okay to be uncomfortable. it’s not fun to feel uncomfortable, but it will happen. when i do feel uncomfortable and i start to believe i will always feel this way, i will remind myself that the feeling will pass.
Facts not feelings. Just because something feels true does not mean that it is.
ACT THE WAY I WANT TO FEEL
References


Gross, M. “Factors in the social adjustment and social acceptability of extremely gifted children” Talent Development,