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Help "De-stress" Your Children

Back-to-school season, while exciting, can be unsettling for young students. They may worry about facing new teachers, classrooms, and classmates. Other children feel stressed because of busy schedules or high expectations that they or their parents set.

Preteens report that school, homework, and grades are their top causes of stress. Feeling like they have to be perfect just adds to some children's anxiety. Signs of perfectionism include being afraid to fail or take risks, never being satisfied with one's success, feeling insecure, and lacking flexibility. Here are some tips for helping children realize when "good enough" is good enough:



Encourage children to enjoy the process rather than just the outcome. Emphasize that the important part of school is to have fun learning, practicing, and doing, rather than being an immediate expert. It's okay to dream big, regardless of the outcome.

Provide age-appropriate tasks to build confidence. To prevent frustration and getting "stuck," show children how to tackle achievable tasks one at a time.

Accept "good enough" yourself. Try not to dwell on children's mistakes. Offer many more comments about what they're doing right than about what they're doing wrong. Talk about times you've done your best and been satisfied with a less-than-perfect outcome.

Me, Worry?

- 31% of children ages 9 to 12 say they "worry a lot," and 47% suffer from insomnia. *(Children's Ministry Magazine)*
- Children whose family lives are stressful are nearly twice as likely as other kids to have low levels of school engagement and four times as likely to have behavioral and emotional problems. *("Stressful Family Lives" by Kristin Moore & Sharon Vandivere)*
- About 14% of children ages 5 to 12 spend an average of about one hour alone at home after school. Kids left alone tend to have more difficulty handling school assignments. *(momdadchat.com)*

PowerSource



Ask God:

1. To help your children have a positive school year.
2. To help you and your children manage life's stresses.
3. To help you resist the urge to be a "perfect" parent.

Parenting Insights

Psychologist Les Parrott III, writing in *Children's Ministry Magazine*, offers these ways to lower children's stress levels:

1. **Take care of your stress.** Monitor your stress level and protect yourself from running on empty. Take time to relax and find social support.
2. **Model coping skills.** Keep calm when problems arise because children will follow your example.
3. **Acknowledge children's feelings.** Help them find words and "I" statements to express their frustrations.
4. **Accept stress as normal.** Jesus told his disciples they'd face troubles. But it's possible to turn stressful times into times of growth.
5. **Know when to seek help.** When children's stress turns to panic, consult a professional.

OpenTheBook

**"Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you."
1 Peter 5:7**

Jesus warns that his followers will face earthly trials, but he also promises to protect and comfort us. Because our loving God is in control, we can put all our anxieties on his shoulders.

Teachable Moments

- 1. Under Pressure**—Give family members each an inflated balloon, and have them gradually step on it as everyone calls out stresses and pressures. When all balloons are broken, read aloud Philippians 4:6 and share ways that God helps us deal with stress.
- 2. Puzzled**—Work on a jigsaw puzzle and talk about the challenges of putting all the pieces of a puzzle—and life—together. Read aloud Luke 1:37 and discuss how Jesus helps us solve even the toughest problems.
- 3. Built to Last**—Together, use blocks or LEGOS to make as tall of a tower as possible. Talk about why your creation always falls down and why our efforts to be perfect will always fail. Then discuss ways that God is our sturdy foundation and how we can stand tall in him.



"So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are ON THE ROAD, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up." Deuteronomy 11:18-19, NLT

Help your children open up about stress and perfectionism by asking these discussion-starter questions:

1. What excites and worries you about going back to school?
2. What good does it do to worry about things we can't control? What are some ways we can hand our worries to God?
3. What are some things you try to do "just right," and why? How do you feel when you mess up?
4. How do you know when you've done your best or when something is "good enough"? How can you be satisfied with that?

Family Experience: Putting It in Perspective

Try these fun activities to put problems and priorities in place:

- **Lift Your Hearts**—With permanent marker, draw a heart on a hard-boiled egg. Pour ½ cup salt into a paper cup with "Jesus" written on the side. Fill a clear jar half full of water. Hold the egg so everyone can see the heart. Say: "Sometimes our hearts feel heavy with worries. What are some worries you have?" As you drop the egg into the jar of water, say: "Worries make our hearts sink inside us. But Jesus can take away those worries." Pour the salt into the jar and stir the water for a while. Read aloud Matthew 11:28-30. When the egg rises to the top and floats, say: "When we give our worries to Jesus, our hearts become lighter." Close in prayer.
- **Balancing Act**—Align the edge of a book exactly along a table edge. Ask: "What are some of your responsibilities? Sometimes it seems like we can't get everything done in a day. Each responsibility puts us a bit closer to being over the edge." Place a second book atop the first so it hangs one inch beyond the edge of the first—and over the table edge. List responsibilities as you keep placing three more books in the same manner. Ask: "How could I place each of these books without any of them falling? What would happen if I moved the bottom one?" Move it and watch the books fall. Read aloud 2 Chronicles 27:6. Say: "A priority is something that's more important than another thing." Ask: "What could happen if we don't keep our priorities in order? How can keeping our priorities straight help us deal with life's stresses?"





What's Playing at the Movies

Movie: *Alpha and Omega* (releases Sept. 17)
Genre: Family animation/adventure
Rating: Not yet rated
Cast: Voiced by Hayden Panettiere, Justin Long, Danny Glover, Dennis Hopper, Christina Ricci
Synopsis: While making their way back home after being captured by park rangers, two young wolves must deal with their personality differences. Kate, an alpha, is serious and driven, while Humphrey, an omega, likes to hang out and have fun. The wolves have to get along and bond so they can restore peace between rival packs at home.
Discussion Questions: How would you describe your personality? What kinds of people do you get along with the best: those who are similar to or different from you? Explain. Read aloud Genesis 25:21-28. How can we get along with and learn to enjoy people whose personalities and backgrounds are very different from our own?



What Music Is Releasing

Artist: Sarah Kelly
Album: *Midnight Sun*
Artist Info: Kelly, a contemporary Christian singer-songwriter, has been a piano teacher and a worship leader. Because she left an abusive relationship and struggled with poor self-esteem, Kelly often sings about healing.
Summary: *Midnight Sun* builds on the raspy vocals and powerful lyrics of Kelly's acclaimed albums *Take Me Away* and *Where the Past Meets Today*. She's been compared to Janis Joplin and Sheryl Crow. Of the idea behind "Living Hallulejah," Kelly says, "It's wanting every attitude, every action, every motive, everything about me to be glorifying God."
Discussion Questions: How does your life show that you love and follow God? What makes it hard or easy for you to love yourself, and why? Read aloud 1 Corinthians 10:31. How can our everyday attitudes and actions give glory to God?



What Games Are Out

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
<i>Guilty Party</i>	Up to four players join the Dickens Detective Agency to solve crimes together.	E; Wii
<i>Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies</i>	In this RPG (role-playing game), multiplayer modes let players share their customized adventures with others.	E10+; Nintendo DS
<i>Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge</i>	A wannabe pirate pursues a lost treasure. This series is known for its humor, creativity, and throwback puzzle-solving.	E10+; Xbox 360, iPad

GAME RATINGS KEY: EC=Early Childhood, E=Everyone (ages 6+), E10+ (ages 10+), T=Teen (ages 13+)



Culture & Trends

What's happening right now that may affect your children and family:

- TV critics say the new fall schedule is full of crass, cringe-worthy shows about rude behavior and topics such as obesity, cancer, and outsourced jobs. The week of September 19 is a national Turnoff Week.
- Fashion-obsessed girls known as "haulers" have become an online force. Many are now building a fan base—and even getting ad profits—by modeling and discussing their shopping finds on sites such as YouTube.

Quick Stats

- 69% of American adults remember consistently attending Sunday school as a child. Of those adults, 50% now attend church weekly, which is higher than the national average. (Barna Group)



- During the last 10 years, dads have significantly increased their involvement with their children at school. (fathers.com)

