



# Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

## Aim for Success, Not Stress

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In today's fast paced, technology driven world, children have opportunities to pursue several different activities. They may feel pressure to overextend themselves in order to achieve "success," and in result achieve stress. High-achieving children may feel pressure to take the honors level classes, join the after school clubs, and tryout for varsity sports. Approximately seven percent of high-achieving children suffer from sadness, anxiety, and depression nationwide. Some children may develop physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches due to this stress. Others may internalize these symptoms and show no outward signs or symptoms. Parents are an important part of helping children learn to strive for success in a healthy way by emphasizing the importance of well-being.



### Tips for Reducing Pressure



**1. Ask!** Ask your children how they feel about school and extracurricular responsibilities. Let them know it is okay to ask for help or say no to certain activities.



**2. Loosen up the reins.** Kids that are able to practice taking small risks by making choices independently feel like they have more control over their own lives. They also are less likely to suffer from anxiety and depression and more likely to experience an increase of self-confidence.



**3. Encourage free play.** Play is important to social and cognitive development. Kids that play practice the arts of negotiation, compromise, communication, and relationship-building. These are important skills and contribute to success in work, school, and life.



**4. Cut out some activities.** Encourage kids to lessen the amount of activities they are involved in when they can. Communicate that it is okay for kids to have a lighter schedule so time and energy can be well-spent pursuing interests and strengths.



**5. Start a conversation and keep it going.** Frequent dialogue with your children about their likes and interests can go a long way in encouraging them to pursue success with a goal of well-being.



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If you are concerned that your child is showing signs of stress due to pressure to achieve, ask! Ask if he/she is pursuing certain activities by choice, due to pressure from peers to join, or because he/she feels pressure to add one more thing to his/her list of achievements. Encourage your child to make choices independently or say no to an event or activity if his/her plate is just too full. Focus on celebrating different kinds of successes, like non-academic hobbies or an average grade on an assignment. It is a good thing for parents to want their child to succeed; however, teaching the skills necessary to prioritize mental and emotional health and well-being is just as important to achieving success.



Resources:

"The Perils of Pushing Kids Too Hard, and How Parents Can Learn to Back Off" accessed September 6, 2018 from <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots>

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