



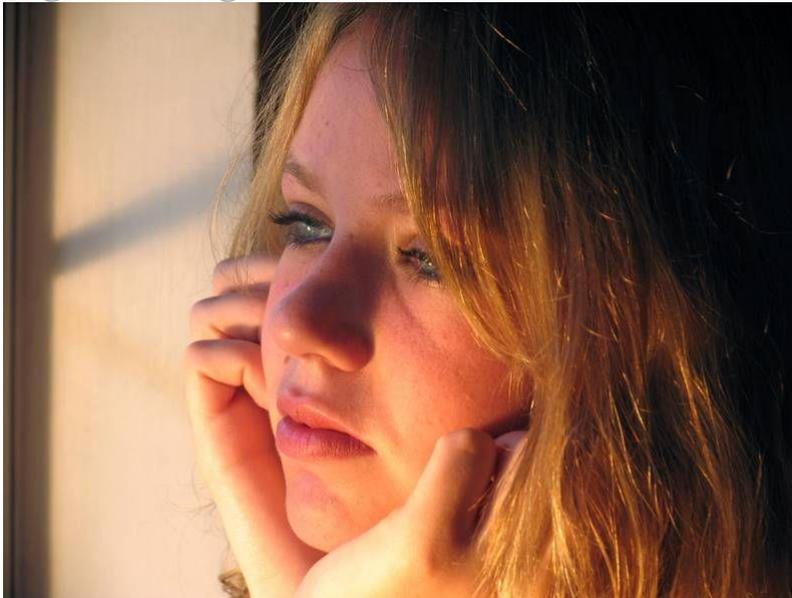
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School Stress - Helping to Overcome Elementary Anxiety

How to help children overcome stress and anxiety in relation to school.

Eric Summers

5 years ago



School Stress and Test Anxiety (Anita Patterson)

Elementary school is a difficult place for many children. It is here that children begin to form their social lives, experiment with their identity, and are exposed to a wide range of new subjects and experiences. This new environment along with the pressure to maintain good grades can be very

stressful for a child. Parents should learn how to help their children with school stress and test anxiety.

Talking Through School Stress

As with many problems, communication can be very critical in overcoming school stress. The parent should maintain a dialog with both the student and the teacher. The more a parent knows about what is going on at school, the easier it will be to find solutions.

Mary Muscari, associate professor in the Decker School of Nursing at Binghamton University, and author of *Let Kids Be Kids: Rescuing Childhood* [University of Scranton Press, 2006] gives these tips to Suite101 on keeping the lines of communication open:

- Keep the lines of communication open with your child ask about their day at school. Your child is more likely to come tell you about a problem, if he knows you are there to listen.
- Keep track of his homework and grades – don't wait for the report card.
- Get involved with your child's school and know his teachers. Talk to them often to find out how your child is doing. It's easier to notice a face in a crowd when there is someone else to connect to it – especially that someone else's parent.

Remove School Stress Through Relaxation

Pressure at school leads to stress which can lead to anxiety. Anxiety can cause performance and behavior problems in even the best of kids. Helping children learn to relax can help alleviate both stress and anxiety and hopefully improve school performance.

"Just telling a child to 'relax' isn't enough. They need to be taught how to relax. Teaching breathing techniques, using self-talk, and practicing techniques and developing good work habits," says Psychologist Dr. Sybil

Keane in an interview with Suite101. "Reinforcement of study habits, having a positive attitude and getting rid of all the negative self-talk are a few of the best techniques."

Anxiety and stress at school can have an impact on a child's self confidence, which in turn can lead to poor performance, which leads to even more stress. Helping a child block out negative thoughts and anxiety is important.

"I work with a lot of kids who experience test anxiety, teaching them to say 'Stop' whenever they start thinking thoughts that are negative. Negative thoughts only feed the anxiety, replacing the negative thoughts with positive affirmations works wonders," Dr. Keane says.

Removing Stress Through Creativity

Engaging in creative activities are a great way to relieve stress. It helps to both give the mind something to focus on as well as creating an outlet for feelings and frustrations that a child might have trouble expressing verbally. When parents perform these activities with the child, it helps to both relieve school stress and foster relationships.

Mary Muscari recommends:

- Create a comic book.
- Develop a theme song for your favorite book.
- Write a book together and have your own signing.
- Make a scrapbook on your safari through the state park or even your own backyard.
- Grow a pizza garden with tomatoes, herbs and veggies shaped in a circle.

Overcoming School Stress

As school and societal pressures continue to grow, stress at school can become a very real problem for children. Parents should help their children overcome this stress by communicating with them about problems, helping them learn and practice relaxation techniques, and using creative play to help relieve anxiety. While school stress can seem overwhelming, when parents work and play together with their children it can be overcome.