



peer pressure

PARENTING PRESSURE

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Parenting is a process of trial and error that takes us through a rollercoaster of emotions. The very nature of parenting requires us to think through our decisions thoroughly, but also accept that we will get some things wrong.

There is no official handbook telling us what to do. As a result, we listen to friends, co-workers and other parents. Using these people as resources can inadvertently cause self-doubt, anxiety and concern about what others think about us.

When we ask for advice, we also allow judgment because asking for help requires discussing an issue that can make us feel vulnerable. No one likes to feel vulnerable, including parents. Afraid of being

judged by other parents, we often make decisions for our kids that will improve how we would like our peers to see us, but this is not always in our children's best interest. Pressuring our kids to be proud and want us to be happy with them. Getting caught up in whether they are faster, smarter or better than someone else is more about the goals and expectations that we set for our children.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Whether competing in sports, academics or with siblings, the bottom line is the same: Kids feel the pressure from their parents. The truth is that our children want to make us proud and want us to be happy with them. Getting caught up in whether they are faster, smarter or better than someone else is more about the goals and expectations that we set for our children.

Seeing a child suffer from trying to reach an unattainable goal set for them by his or her parent is heartbreaking. There is nothing worse than seeing a child break down who is genuinely trying to reach an unattainable goal.

Pushing a child beyond his or her natural abilities, academic or athletic, only makes things worse. Paying thousands of dollars for training and tutoring adds to the pressure and the frustration.

REALISTIC SOLUTIONS

Reversing the pattern of pressuring our kids is surprisingly easy. The first step is to change the focus from expectations to acceptance. If

we accept, for example, that it is not our child's personal goal to make the travel soccer team, we can stop expecting them to put in hours of training to qualify and free ourselves from the frustrations and anger that arise when they don't perform.

The second step is to respect our kids for who they are. Comparing them to their peers is something I strongly advise against because it doesn't allow them to be judged on their own merits.

Lastly, try to be an encouraging voice for your child. We often get caught up in the demands of our own lives, too busy to stop for a moment to genuinely show interest in and excitement for our children's endeavors. Children want their parents to be happy and proud. They will work harder to achieve goals when we are engaged and encouraging.

Remember, trial and error is a part of parenting. When we are honest and engaged with our kids, they will put forth more effort to be honest and engaged with us. ■

Social media adds an entirely new level to peer pressure. On top of dealing with the stress of fitting in at school through sports and other activities, teens now have to navigate life in an online world.

Parents remain largely unaware that these sites are causing undue stress on their kids. To begin to understand, here are the top social media sites used by teens and brief insight on why they are problematic:

Instagram:

Allows users to share photos and short videos publicly or privately with followers. Teens are beginning to define their self-worth based on the number of 'likes' they receive on Instagram posts and the number of followers they have.

Twitter: Allows users to post 140 character tweets about anything that comes to mind. Followers can

retweet, favorite, reply and quote tweets. Although tweets can be deleted, the impulsive nature of teens to act first and think later often results in peer conflict and social consequences.

Snapchat: A messaging app that allows users to send private pictures and videos that are automatically deleted upon receipt. Snapchat recently added an option for users to post a "story" which is viewable for 24 hours by all followers. The ability to control when an image "goes away" leads users

to send inappropriate images that they otherwise may not send. Many of these are suggestive or indecent photos or videos that qualify as child pornography.

Vine: Allows users to create 6-second clips that can be edited and posted privately or publicly. Vine has thousands of video posts that show drug use, nudity, and illegal activity.

& PEER PRESSURE & SOCIAL MEDIA