



Newsletter

February 2017

Topics:

- Perfectionism
- Social Emotional Learning
- Technology Safety

Perfectionism: Healthy or Unhealthy?

During the past few months SCIP has distributed numerous materials on mental health disorders and substance abuse trends. We often emphasize problematic behaviors like low grades, skipping class and the list goes on, but what about the students that appear to be working hard in school and are not displaying problematic behaviors? Students are under significant pressure to succeed, to perform well and to be *perfect*. Grades, SAT or ACT scores, extracurricular activities and pressure from peers can be overwhelming for students. The pressure can be especially challenging for perfectionists.

According to Merriam-Webster, perfectionism is “the setting of unrealistically demanding goals accompanied by a disposition to regard failure to achieve them as unacceptable and a sign of personal worthlessness.” Perfectionism can begin at a young age, which may be expressed through tantrums or similar behaviors. Perfectionism goes beyond the “over-achiever” mentality. Perfectionists often set high standards and do not feel satisfied with themselves or the results. Perfectionists may spend a significant amount of time on an assignment or even one element of an assignment, making it very challenging to complete the assignment on time.

Signs of Perfectionism:

- Believes mistakes are a sign of weakness
- Frequently seeks approval from others
- Lives by self-created rules and expectations
- Procrastinates or misses deadlines
- Becomes depressed when faced with disappointment
- Becomes defensive when criticized
- Displays self-defeating behaviors and negative self-talk
- In some cases children may become so overwhelmed by certain tasks that they give up or become avoidant

It can be challenging to recognize signs of perfectionism because many perfectionists internalize their negative thoughts and feelings. Perfectionism can lead to low-achievement and low self-esteem. Perfectionists are more likely to have anxiety, depression or an eating disorder. Perfectionism can also cause significant amounts of stress, which can have long term effects on the body.

New research has also revealed a link between perfectionism and suicide. A perfectionist may appear like they are successful and happy, but on the inside they are struggling. Perfectionists want to be or appear to be *perfect*, so they put up a façade. Perfectionists may also have a strong desire to appear *emotionally perfect*, so they are not as willing to discuss suicidal ideations. If you believe someone is thinking about suicide, connect them to services immediately and help create a safe, non-judgmental space to discuss feelings.

Perfectionism is not all negative however. Small amounts of perfectionism are normal. Goal setting and striving to be your best self are admirable qualities to have. It becomes problematic when the goals are



rarely met resulting in self-defeating behaviors and negative self-talk. Pay particular attention to the severity of the perfection-seeking behaviors.

Ways to Support a Perfectionist Child:

- Help children set realistic goals and expectations
- Focus on the journey rather than the end result
- Focus praise toward work ethic and character traits, rather than a grade in a class or on an exam
- Educate children on how to prioritize
- Discuss any worries or concerning situations
- Be a positive role model
- Help child develop confidence and positive self-talk

If you are a perfectionist and a parent, modeling positive self-talk can go a long way. Modeling healthy behaviors can help perfectionists children learn to cope with perfectionism. Mindfulness techniques, like meditation, can also help perfectionists, of any age, learn to be more in the moment and less focused on future stressors and anxieties.

To learn more about mindfulness use the link below.

Additional Mindfulness Exercises: <http://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>

Resources:

<http://www.todayparent.com/family/family-health/nobodys-perfect-how-to-handle-your-childs-perfectionism/>

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/six-ways-to-help-your-perfectionist-child-find-balance/>

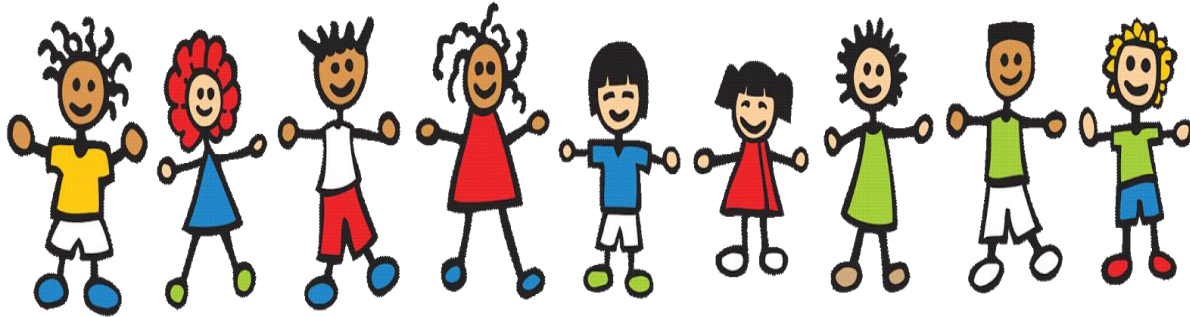
<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/social-emotional-issues/perfectionism>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-moment-youth/201307/two-faces-perfectionism>

<http://www.rootsofaction.com/are-you-raising-a-perfectionist/>

<http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2014/09/alarming-new-research-on-perfectionism.html>

<http://www.medicaldaily.com/heart-attacks-suicide-how-being-perfectionist-can-impact-your-health-352736>



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Almost anywhere you go, you will find schools that are filled with students with different cultural, social and economic backgrounds. It's not enough to simply fill a child's mind with facts. A successful education requires that a student's character be developed as well. That's where Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) comes in. SEL is the process of helping students develop the skills to manage their emotions, resolve conflict nonviolently, and make responsible decisions.

While family, community, and society play a significant role in fostering emotional intelligence and character development, educators must create a safe, supportive learning environment.

Not only does SEL help foster emotional intelligence and help build character, it also provides a positive foundation for learning that improves a student's ability to succeed in school, at a job, and ultimately in life. Research shows that SEL not only improves school achievement by an average of more than 10 percentage points, it also develops prosocial behaviors such as kindness, sharing, and empathy. These things help improve student attitudes toward school, while reducing depression and stress among students.

SEL focuses on five core skills that can be taught in many ways across many settings.

1. **Self-Awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."
 - Identifying emotions
 - Accurate self-perception
 - Recognizing strengths
 - Self-confidence
 - Self-efficacy

2. **Self-Management:** The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
 - Impulse control
 - Stress management
 - Self-discipline
 - Self-motivation
 - Goal-setting
 - Organizational skills

3. **Social Awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
 - Perspective-taking
 - Empathy
 - Appreciating diversity
 - Respect for others

4. **Relationship Skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
 - Communication
 - Social engagement
 - Relationship-building
 - Teamwork

5. **Responsible Decision Making:** The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.
 - Identifying problems
 - Analyzing situations
 - Solving problems
 - Evaluating
 - Reflecting
 - Ethical responsibility

SEL helps schools and teachers lay the groundwork for establishing an environment of trust and respect in and outside the classroom. Before children can be expected to unite to achieve academic goals, they must be taught how to work together, and SEL provides them with strategies and tools for cooperative learning.

All of these are skills, attitudes, and behaviors that parents, educators, and employers value.

For more information about SEL programs and SEL resources please visit these websites:

<https://www.edutopia.org/.../implement-sel-at-your-school-elias-leverett-duffell-hump>
www.cfchildren.org/second-step
www.teachthought.com/learning/2-resources-for-social-emotional-learning/
www.berkeleyschools.net

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www.edweek.org/ew/articles/.../new-effort-to-promote-social-emotional-learning-in.html
www.qtlcenter.org



Cyber Safety: The Influence of Social Media & Technology

In today's digital world, understanding the influence of social media and technology on our youth is especially important. Not only is the age of adolescence a developmentally vulnerable stage, but teenagers are also amongst the heaviest users of social networking sites. The ability to access such social media sites as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat via smartphones and other mobile devices has made it even easier for kids to connect to the digital world. According to a study conducted by Pew Research Center (2015):

- 88% of all teens have cell phones
- 24% of teens report they go online "almost constantly"
- 71% of all teens use more than one social network site
- 1/3 of teens use messaging apps
- On average teenagers send and receive 30 texts per day



While there are no doubt benefits to social media and the use of technology (enhance communication, facilitate social interaction and help develop technical skills), it is important for parents to likewise understand the risks. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, adolescents' limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure puts them at greater risk. Problems that are worthy of awareness include cyberbullying, sexting, privacy issues and sleep deprivation.

Cyberbullying

With increased access to social media and technology, today's youth are facing a different type of bullying that can occur at any time and any place, making it difficult to escape. Cyberbullying is when someone repeatedly and intentionally harasses, mistreats or makes fun of another person online or while using cell phones, computers or other electronic devices. Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles. According to the Cyberbullying Research Center, cyberbullying is different from in person bullying as follows:

1. Bullies can be anonymous and messages or images can be distributed quickly to a wide audience
2. Victims are accessible 24/7
3. It is often easier to be cruel electronically due to the physical distance

The stress and strain of cyberbullying can leave victims feeling hopeless and have lasting negative effects on the mental health and well-being of youth. Kids who are cyberbullied are more likely to:

- Use alcohol and drugs
- Skip school or be unwilling to attend school
- Suffer from depression or anxiety
- Have poor school performance
- Have lower self-esteem
- Have an increased risk for suicide related behavior

Sexting

Sexting is the action of sending sexually revealing pictures of oneself or sexually explicit messages to another individual or group. While teens who send these photos and messages may intend for them to go to one individual or a small peer group, there is no guarantee where the material will eventually end up. Sexting has the potential to negatively influence a teenager's life emotionally, socially and legally. The information on the internet is there forever with the potential for future consequences. When a sexted message gets into the hands of unintended recipients, it can cause a great deal of emotional distress for the victim. Likewise, many teens do not understand the laws that surround texting. Those that receive an image and then redistribute that image could face charges. In 2009, Nebraska passed legislation that addressed the issue of teenage sexting. In general, under the law, individuals under 18 years of age or younger will not be prosecuted if they receive a sexually explicit image of a minor, who is at least 15 years of age, via text message and the subject of the image voluntarily created the image. If the recipient of the image distributes the image to anyone then such individual will be subject to prosecution under Nebraska's child pornography statute and may receive jail time. The best way to prevent your teen from sexting is communication. Discussing the consequences of sexting is a good way to start. As a parent, familiarize yourself with the laws surrounding texting and stay informed.

Privacy Concerns

Teens share a plethora of information about themselves on social networking sites. Preadolescents and adolescents may lack an awareness of privacy issues and post inappropriate messages, pictures and videos without understanding that what goes online, stays online. 1 in 6 online teens say they have been contacted online by someone they did not know in a way that made them feel scared or uncomfortable (Pew Research Center). The good news is that according to a survey by the Pew Research Center, 60% of teen Facebook users keep their profiles private and most report high levels of confidence in their ability to manage their settings. Teen social media users report sharing the following personal information on their profiles:

- 91% post a photo of themselves
- 71% post their school name
- 71% post the city/town where they live
- 53% post their email address
- 20% post their cell phone number

Parents can educate their adolescents about the importance of privacy settings and communicate the need to be mindful of what they share and post via text messages, social media and online chat rooms.

Sleep Deprivation

It is no secret that tweens and teens often fail to get the recommended hours of sleep, but teenagers who routinely utilize their computer or mobile phones in bed are more than twice as likely to be sleep deprived than other adolescents (Sleep Review-Journal for Sleep Specialists, 2014). Night time technology use can profoundly influence the health and learning potential of our adolescents. The fact that kids can "connect" to their social world via electronics 24/7 can make disconnecting especially challenging. One report suggests that kids are driven to stay up late texting, chatting and gaming with their peers via phone, computer or other electronic devices for fear of "missing out". Kids want to be in

the know of all what is going on. Likewise, many kids turn to their devices and gadgets at night to simply pass the time. Communicating with kids to reassure them that their social life will still be there when they wake up in the morning, replacing electronic devices with books or magazines, setting electronic curfews and monitoring teenagers sleep and social media use are good first steps in creating healthy sleep habits in today's digital world.

What Parents and Youth Serving Professionals Can Do

- Talk to children and adolescents about their online use and the specific issues that today's kids face such as cyberbullying, sexting and privacy concerns.
- Become educated about the many technologies and social media sites youth are using.
- Develop a family online-use plan, with an emphasis on digital citizenship and healthy behavior.
- Supervise online activities through active participant and communication (monitoring software is available, but actively talking with youth about their use may be a more powerful influence).
- Instill in youth that using technology and having access to electronic devices is a privilege that requires a level of responsibility.
- Establish "electronic curfews".

References: The American Academy of Pediatrics; The Cyberbullying Research Center; Pew Research Center; Sleep Review-Journal for Sleep Specialists; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; <https://nobullying.com>; www.mobilemediagurad.com; www.teensafe.com