

Are Your Kids Getting Bad Grades?

It Could Be Stress

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Have you ever wondered why your children struggle in school? Or better yet, how is it they do well for a season and then fall apart? Studies have shown that stress is a huge factor in school grades.

Consider the three ingredients driving stress and how they are found in your home.

1. **Emotional intensity**
2. **A strong dislike or aversion**
3. **Lack of control**

When was the last time you and your spouse had an argument? Did the children witness your argument?

Kelly's Story

The following story is from Dr. John Medina and his book "*Brain Rules*." The teacher in this story is Dr. Medina's mother. This is how he witnessed the tragedy of Kelly.

Kelly was an A student and her teacher's pride and joy. She always did her homework, she was smart, socially poised, and blessed with an abundance of friends. But things changed after Christmas break.

The teacher noticed the change the moment Kelly walked into the classroom. Kelly's eyes were downward. Within a week Kelly received her first ever C on an exam and that was her highpoint. She spiraled down from there with a litany of Ds and Fs and many visits to the Principal's office for fights and unruly behavior.

"Exasperated, my mother decided to find out what caused this meltdown. She learned that Kelly's parents had decided to get a divorce over Christmas and that the family conflicts, from which the parents valiantly had insulated Kelly, had begun spilling out into the open.

As things unraveled at home, things also unraveled at school. And on that snowy day, when my mother gave Kelly her third straight D in spelling, my mother also swore:

"DAMMIT!" she said, nearly under her breath. I froze as she shouted, "THE ABILITY OF KELLY TO DO WELL IN MY CLASS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MY CLASS!"

She was, of course, describing the relationship between home life and school life, a link that has frustrated teachers for a long time.

One of the greatest predictors of performance in school turns out to be the emotional stability of the home."

Parents, you play the primary role in your children's happiness and well being.

Stress indicator #1 Children are not equipped to handle emotional stress and variations within the home. Parents are responsible for bringing stability and fostering a loving, learning, and trusting environment.

Stress indicator #2 Children have a strong aversion to contentious behavior? Parents, who constantly yell, get angry OR freeze out their kids, meaning stop talking, introduce contention. This is also known as silence or violence.

Stress indicator #3 Children that feel they have no control over the home environment? When a child feels helpless in the space he shares with his parents, he moves into isolation. He will eventually act out by leaving that space as often as possible with an eventual permanent exit.

Most parents are stuck in old habits and traditions that don't work. Consider the Rules of Engagement again:

1. Speak Above The Line
2. Be Present
3. Be Neutral

Speak above the line: Which means outside The Me Pyramid. You don't try to convince your children that you are right. That is a sure fire way to push them away from you. Remember that space you share with them must be neutral. When you attempt to be right you are not listening.

Be Present: Are you aware of what's happening in your child's life? What is your girl afraid of? What keeps her up at night? What is her passion in life? Does she know it's okay for her passion not to be in harmony with yours?

Be Neutral: Picture the space you share with your son. Is he invited into that space without the risk of being judged? Are his actions given levels of approval? Too often we praise things outside of our child's control: looks, height, athletic ability, natural smarts, versus focusing on their effort or the learning process.

A lack of neutrality can set your child up for failure when he enters the real world. Furthermore, a constant barrage of criticism will destroy his internal force field that protects each child from negativity. Eventually, he will break down and no longer have the energy to fight the constant judging of his parents.

Parents were created to strengthen not to weaken. Are you giving your child strength or do you break him down or give him false accolades that are empty and void of substance?