The Problems with Perfection

As parents, it’s tempting to push our kids to do better, and it may even feel like it’s our job to do so. We might push them to have neater coloring skills, to be early readers, to earn the ‘first chair’ in band, to make a select sports team, to earn top grades — and the list goes on.

However, when kids feel too much pressure to achieve — when they feel they must be perfect rather than simply try their best — this is perfectionism. It’s setting the bar too high for our achievements and behaviors, then thinking and feeling negatively when we can’t meet those expectations. It’s no wonder that perfectionism, which is a symptom of anxiety, can lead to serious health risks including depression and eating disorders.

Perfectionism shows up in various ways. Expecting ourselves to be perfect can cause tension, worry and other problems. Expecting others to be perfect makes it hard to have healthy relationships; others don’t enjoy being with us if we’re always unhappy with how they do things and we’re always demanding more from them. Finally, if we believe that others expect us to be perfect, we worry that our friends and family will approve of us only if we do what they want us to do, and act the way they want us to act.

So, how can parents help kids avoid the traps of perfectionism? We can praise their efforts rather than the results. We can help them set realistic expectations. We can encourage them to try new things— and to focus on the fun of the experience rather than on their skill level. We can be sure they have plenty of free play time, which may mean limiting after-school activities and other structured events like lessons, clubs and sports teams.

To be clear, wanting to be good at things is great! However, getting things done is better than getting things perfect. Overthinking and putting things off can become stubborn habits that paralyze us and make us miserable. Instead, we can accept our imperfections. We can even share our ‘best mistakes of the day’ at the family dinner table, find the humor in our missteps, and celebrate what we’ve learned. After all, aren’t we lucky to be imperfect human beings with loving hearts, rather than perfect, boring robots?

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit seattlechildrens.org/clinics/psychiatry-and-behavioral-medicine/patient-family-resources to learn more.
Giving the Gift of Safety

Will your child be getting a new bicycle this holiday season? If so, consider purchasing a bike helmet that meets U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or Snell standards. Will you be heading somewhere warm for the holidays or for an upcoming school break? If you’ll be in or on the water, purchase a new U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket for your child. It’s best to buy new safety gear, rather than purchasing used or receiving hand-me-down gear. That way you know the history of the gear, and that it’s in good condition. Other health-and-safety-related gift ideas include shin guards, wrist guards, knee and elbow pads, ski goggles and water bottles.

To learn more:

No More Playing Through Pain

The days of parents telling their children with sports injuries to “push through it” are over. Doctors and athletic trainers now warn parents and coaches that the consequences of allowing children to play through sports injuries are not worth the risk.

Playing through an injury can worsen the existing injury, cause damage to another area of their body, or even end their sports careers completely. A small injury that could have healed quickly can worsen and take longer to heal. Children may try to hide their pain by compensating for their injury through limping, using their other hand for throwing a ball, or altering their natural techniques. Compensation may help prevent further damage to the injured area, but puts other areas at risk of injury.

Pushing children to continue playing a sport when injured can also cause emotional stress. The emotional and physical burdens from playing through an injury can contribute to burnout. Play it safe — have your child sit out when injured and see their doctor for care.

To learn more:

Growing Up Triggers Changes in Checkups

Starting when kids are tweens, during their medical checkups it’s usual for parents to be asked to leave the room for part of the visit. This is done so the doctor (or the primary health care provider) and the child can speak in private. Parents may feel surprised or puzzled the first time this happens. But in fact, starting somewhere around age 11, a key part of your child’s overall good health is being able to have one-on-one conversations with their doctor.

Since adolescence is a period of such big change both physically and emotionally, a doctor’s job is to monitor their young patients’ overall physical and emotional health. This is why doctors are trained to weave in certain questions during the checkup relating to home, school and education, activities and social life, drug use or experimentation, sexuality, and safety. Where they detect any concerns, they can then provide education on those topics. (They will also explain doctor-patient confidentiality and its limits. See the resource at the end to learn about teen privacy rights.) Most kids are more apt to answer their doctor honestly and ask their own questions when a parent is not present.

Parents can encourage kids to take ownership of their own health and wellbeing, and to speak openly with their doctor. Suggest jotting down any questions they’d like to ask before their visit to be sure they cover the topic. Reassure them that doctors hear all sorts of questions, and they won’t be shocked or surprised by anything.

Regular checkups remain crucial as kids get older. Your child should have one medical checkup and two dental checkups each year through the tween, teen and young-adult years.

To learn more:
Kid Bits

Quick Tip
A consistent bedtime routine helps toddlers form good sleep habits. Wind down with a book, bath or calm music at the same time each night.

2019-2020 Flu Vaccine
A flu vaccine is the best way to prevent getting sick with the flu (influenza). One change for the 2019–2020 flu season is that the nasal spray flu vaccine is back as an option for healthy people ages 2 through 49. You may recall that in the past few years, the nasal spray delivery method was not recommended due to concerns about how well it worked. But the formula has been updated, and the latest data shows the new nasal spray to be effective. The flu can be very serious, and people die from the disease each year. So, whether you opt for the nasal spray vaccine or a traditional flu shot, be sure you and your family are protected. Talk with your child’s doctor if you have any questions.

TO LEARN MORE:

Shopping Cart Safety
Each year, thousands of children — most ages 0 to 4 — get hurt from riding in shopping carts. To prevent falls and other injuries, avoid having a child ride in the cart. Instead, carry infants close to your chest in a front carrier if possible; never put an infant carrier on top of the cart. For toddlers, carts with attached child seats low to the ground (as pictured) are safer than riding in the cart’s seat. If you must use the cart’s seat, be sure your child is buckled in snugly with each leg hanging through its own leg opening. Then, ensure they remain seated and buckled at all times. Bigger kids are safest walking close beside you.

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Shopping-Cart-Dangers.aspx.

Measles
Measles is highly contagious. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control reports that “It is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people around him or her will also become infected if they are not protected.” Recent outbreaks of this serious disease show this to be true. The good news is that measles is preventable thanks to the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. If you suspect your child or another family member has the measles, call your health care provider before seeking care, so you don’t spread the disease. Measles symptoms typically include high fever, cough, runny nose and watery eyes, with a measles rash appearing 3 to 5 days after the first symptoms.

TO LEARN MORE:
Visit cdc.gov/measles.

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TO LEARN MORE:
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Regional Clinic Locations
• Bellevue
• Everett
• Federal Way
• Olympia
• Tri-Cities
• Wenatchee

Primary Care Clinic
• Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic

Main Hospital Numbers
206-987-2000
866-987-2000 (Toll-free)

Online Resources
Visit seattlechildrens.org for the following:
• Child Health Advice
• my Good Growing email newsletter
• Doctor Finder
• On The Pulse and Autism blogs
• Medical condition information
• Health & safety information
• Ways to help Seattle Children’s
• Research Institute information

Heather Cooper is the Editor of Good Growing, which is produced four times a year by the Marketing Communications Department of Seattle Children’s. You can find Good Growing in the January, April, July and October issues of ParentMap and on our website seattlechildrens.org. For permission to reprint articles for non-commercial purposes or to receive Good Growing in an alternate format, call 206-987-5323. The inclusion of any resource or website does not imply endorsement. Your child’s needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon information, please talk with your child’s healthcare provider. © 2019 Seattle Children’s, Seattle, Washington.
Classes and Events

These classes are popular and often fill up several months in advance, so please register early. Scholarships are available. If you would like to ask about a scholarship, call the number provided for the class you’re interested in.

PARENTING CLASSES

Autism 101
This free 90-minute lecture is designed to provide information and support to parents and families of children recently diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. A portion of each session is dedicated to answering questions from the attendees.

Lectures are at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle, once per quarter, on a Thursday, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Lectures are also available via live webcast.

View dates or get instructions for the webcast at seattlechildrens.org/autism101 or call 206-987-8080 if you have questions.

Autism 200 Series
Autism 200 is a series of free 90-minute classes for parents and caregivers of children with autism who wish to better understand autism spectrum disorder. Each class features a different topic.

Classes are usually offered on the third Thursday of the month, 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle. These classes are also available through live streaming using Facebook Live on Seattle Children’s Facebook page.

View dates and topics or view past Autism 200 lectures at seattlechildrens.org/autism200. Call 206-987-8080 if you have questions.

Babysafe
Babysafe is a 4-hour class for new and expectant parents and others who care for babies. Topics include infant development, baby safety, injury prevention and care of common injuries for infants from birth through 12 months of age. Infant CPR is demonstrated and practiced, but this is not a certification class.

This class is offered in Seattle. The fee is $75 and each registration is good for 2 people from the same family. View dates and locations at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-789-2306 if you have questions.

Heartsaver First Aid, CPR and AED
This video-based class for parents and caregivers covers how to treat bleeding, sprains, broken bones, shock and other first-aid emergencies. Also includes infant, child and adult CPR and AED use. Students receive an American Heart Association Heartsaver First Aid, CPR, AED course completion card that is valid for 2 years.

This class is offered at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle for $75 per person. View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-2304 if you have questions.

Youth Mental Health First Aid
This 8-hour class is for adults who regularly interact with adolescents ages 12 to 18. Youth Mental Health First Aid will improve your knowledge of mental health and substance use problems and will teach you how to connect youth with care when needed.

This class is offered at the Sand Point Learning Center in Seattle for $20 per person, which includes class materials and lunch. View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

CHILD, PRETEEN AND TEEN CLASSES

Better Babysitters
For youth, ages 11 to 14. Students learn about responsible babysitting, basic child development, infant and child care, safety, handling emergencies, age-appropriate toys, business tips and parent expectations.

This class is offered in Seattle, Bellevue, Everett and Federal Way. The cost is $50 per person. View dates and locations at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-9878 if you have questions.

CPR and First Aid for Babysitters
For youth, ages 11 to 15. Topics include pediatric CPR, treatment for choking, and first-aid skills. Students receive an American Heart Association Heartsaver Pediatric First Aid, CPR, AED completion card, which is valid for 2 years.

This class is offered at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle for $75 per person. View dates at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-2304 if you have questions.

For Boys: The Joys and Challenges of Growing Up
This class is for boys, 10 to 12 years old, and a parent or trusted adult.

For Girls: A Heart-to-Heart Talk on Growing Up
This class is for girls, 10 to 12 years old, and a parent or trusted adult.

Sibshops
Sibshops are lively peer support groups for siblings of kids with special needs. Separate sessions are held for kids 6 to 9 years old and kids 10 to 13 years old.

Sessions take place at Seattle Children’s hospital campus in Seattle at a cost of $25 per session.

View dates online at seattlechildrens.org/classes or call 206-987-4133.

EVENTS

Staying Close While Standing Back
WHEN: Tuesday, Oct. 15, 7 to 9 p.m.
FEE: $35
WHERE: Seattle Children’s hospital campus, 4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle
REGISTER: greatconversations.org

For parents of preteens and teens looking for new ideas on everyday conversations with their children. Join Julie Metzger, the creator and founder of the Great Conversations programs focused on puberty, sexuality, and decision-making for families of preteens.

Free Car Seat Check
WHEN: Saturday, Oct. 19, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
WHERE: Seattle Children’s hospital campus, 4800 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle
CALL: 206-987-5999

Come learn how to safely secure your child in the car. Child passenger safety experts will check your child in a car seat, booster seat or the seat belt and answer any questions you may have. First come, first served. We do not take reservations.

Staying Close While Standing Back