

# Parenting: a balancing act



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Parenting: A Balancing Act “ You’re not doing well enough! ” Just how many times have children heard this from their parents? After all, parents do expect their children to do well in life, but sometimes those expectations could place too much of a burden on their children. Most parents worry about the “ Big C”, college, which is shown through many of their expectations on their child’s academics, extra-curriculum’s, and sometimes future careers. A study in 2007 by the Childs Trend Databank shows that 69. 7% parents expected their children from 6th to 12th grade to receive a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

Easier said than done right? Of course, the parent might fill their child’s schedule with dozens of E. C’s and A. P classes to make them stand out in the college applications, but that does not mean they will automatically get into any university or college. Like in the article, “ Taming the Overachieving Monster”, the composer, Callie Schweitzer, writes: “ Does being class president, captain of the track team, and sole organizer of the school's clothing drive add up to a top college acceptance? No. All it guarantees is stress. ” Parenting requires balance between high and low expectations, a task not to be taken lightly.

Thus, parents need to learn how to limit their own expectations of their children due to the stress it causes on them. In some cases, the parents put their children in many after-school programs and encourage them to do more if they want to. Of course, not all children look forward to doing so much and simply want to hang around with their friends or go out shopping. However, this sometimes leads to conflict between parent and child. “ I only want to relax in my room and talk on Facebook and have fun, but my mom

yells at me to go do more practice work for the SAT's. says Anonymous 1, a student. The SAT's, or the super important test for college, is one of the few tests that is required by colleges in order to apply to them. Out of a maximum 2400 points, parents expect their children to score high in order for them to get into a good college, but to get a high score in the SATs is not exactly the easiest task to do. Some parents expect 2400, some expect 2000 and up, but it still adds more stress to their child when their already grueling schedule is weighted down even more with SAT preparatory classes.

Back in the article, " Taming the Overachieving Monster", Callie Schweitzer states, " It's natural to want your child to succeed, but what, exactly, qualifies as achievement? Too many of today's parents define it as a 2400 on the SATs\*, a schedule full of AP classes, and extracurricular activities that take up every afternoon of the school week. Parents often dismiss the reality of the hours of homework this kind of academic load entails". And it is quite true; some parents do often dismiss the amount of workload coming from all these academic loads.

In a clear sense, parents need to get rid of college rankings or reputations because any college can give their children a good education despite the rank, if their children actually work hard and try. Just because a college or university is ranked high does not mean that going to any college that is not ranked high nor has a great reputation like the " Ivy Leagues" will not give a good education. After all, even if you have a degree from a " prestigious" college, there is no guarantee that employers will fight for you or you getting instant jobs the moment you step out.

Like in the article, “ Taming the Overachieving Monster,” Callie Schweitzer, quotes, Alexandra Robbins, best-selling author of *The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids*. Robbins writes, “Forget the name-brands, forget the reputations in your area and social circles, and for goodness sake, throw the college rankings in the trash. ” Getting a job takes your own effort and time, not solely on getting a degree from a “ super-ranked college”. “ My parents expect me to get into the UC’s only and not any State schools or City Colleges,” replies Anonymous 5, yet another student worried about their future paths.

To be honest, it really is up to the student to choose which college he or she wants to go to and not the parent deciding which college for them. True, any parents can expect their child to do well in school and life, but even that can lead to too much of a burden upon their child. It must be taken into account that not all students enjoy studying for school or even actually going to school. After all, everyone is different, but that is not really taken into account when it comes to schooling or work.

As in many cases, there are good and bad sides to expectations from parents. In some cases, it can be harmful or stressful for the student and sometimes helpful. “ My mom expects a lot out of me and I do find it wearing at times, but I do believe that it helps me work harder in school,” informs Anonymous 2, another student. Sometimes, children with high expectations from parents feel the urge to do well in sports or school to meet their parent’s expectations. Of course, to set yourself high and fail lets you learn from your mistakes and reevaluate your pathway from that.

High expectations also means that kids may not be as lazy or lax about doing well in life because setting a goal in life, whether it be made by the parent or child, does help lead the way in the future. Some students have greater confidence for themselves because they know that they can achieve high expectations from their parents as well as goals. In the article, "Debate: Parental Expectations", the writer, Lu Shizhen, writes, "Parental expectations can motivate children to build a strong mind and encourage them to achieve their best academic performance.

Therefore, there is nothing wrong with parents who pin expectations on the development of their children. However, such parental expectations should be realistic. "Unfortunately, planning to aim high is a good idea, but making realistic goals to achieve is not the easiest thing to do. Also, in some cases, parents might not recognize the successes of their children managing to achieve the expectations that the parents have set, which winds up leaving the child not enjoying to succeed or have major goals. "I do what my mom expects me to do all the time, but most of the time, my mom gives me even harder things to accomplish," says Anonymous 3.

Not all kids feel like doing every last thing parents throw at them and parents need to learn how to respect that. After all, some parents do not see how their expectations stress their children out more than it actually helps them. Eventually the stress can be too much and might crack in your child dropping of many kinds. Parents should not expect their child to live up to every expectation, because everyone has different wants, likes, personalities, hates, etc. Just like in the article, "Why Can't Johnny Jump Tall Buildings? , the composer Alan Kazdin tells us, "Just remember, as you go

about it, that it's only human for parents to tend to expect that our children can do more than they can really do. Even slight adjustments of your expectations to compensate for that tendency—a little more emphasis on shaping, a little more patience, a little reflection on what's really important to you as a parent and what behaviors can be left to disappear or develop on their own—can produce surprisingly excellent results. " Parents expect a lot out of their children because they truly want the best from them, but often times it can go too far.

Many parents do not want their children to follow their path, especially if their path was filled with difficulty and problems that they do not want their children to face, so they want to see them do better and have a life without any of the hardship their parents have faced. However, some parents force their children to do extra work in order for them not to face the problems they had and not everyone likes doing extra work. " Well, it's true that I want my kids to achieve far in life, but I also know that I probably sometimes do a bit too much", says Anonymous 5, a mother of 3.

After all, parent's expectations come from their care, but even that could be too much for their child. Of course, parents would not mind their kids to get into " name brand, great reputation colleges", but that would be up to the child. " I do believe that my parents want me to achieve well in life and all, but they sometimes annoy me to no end. " says Anonymous 6, a student, " I really hate it when I'm doing something I, myself, want to do, but then my parents yell at me to do something they want me to do. Their Intentions are good, but they need to know about my own feelings when it comes to their expectations. Teenagers have a lot to say about a wide range of topics, but

when it comes to their parents it can be endless. After all, the looming threat of college in the typical teenager's life causes anxiety for both the teen and parent. Unfortunately, that anxiety could lead to a split in the parent and child relationship. " Sometimes their expectations are too much for me to do. I do one good thing, but they view more of the bad things I do," says Anonymous 4, another student, " It's hard to achieve what they want. I understand them, but I wish they understood me more as well.

Their expectations affect my life both in a good way and bad way since it makes me work harder, but leads to me getting a lot of stress and frustrations. " After all, do parents truly understand their children's feelings? Perhaps not. Due to the anxiety to see their children get into college and doing well in their life, some parents do not take the teenager's feelings into consideration. " They do expect me to do well in school, and to achieve my goals, but not to do anything I want," says Anonymous 5, " Sure, they want me to do what I really want to pursue and become in life, but at times they can be confusing to me. Of course, not all parents expect so much out of their children, but not to the point where expectations are completely lacking. " My mom, she doesn't expect me to be perfect, with great grades, 4. 0's, or anything, so we get along fine. I do not find that affects my life that much, although my siblings influence my good grades in school, because I do not want to follow what they did in their lives. Expectations have its ups and downs, but everyone views it differently. " My mom expects me to get 4. 0's and to get as many E. A's as possible, which I do not find likable.

Many times, we argue over the stress of my achieving well and the threat of college, but it usually never ends well. I believe that my life is more stressed

and frustrated than before and I am getting tired of it," says Anonymous 6. In the end, parents definitely need to at least try to see if their children are becoming stressed out trying to pass their expectations. However, are expectations from parents really needed? Truthfully, expectations can help improve the mind set of students and their own expectations of doing well for themselves. A lack of expectations might lead to a drop in schoolwork and an allowance of bad grades.

Students with uncaring parents might wind up with themselves having low expectations on grades what they expect in life from their parents. Some students believe that their parent's expectations really are not needed in their already stressed lives. " Well, I could just put my parent's voices onto a tape recorder and that would be good enough. I hate how they want me to do all this stuff when I just want to do things I really want to do. I find the expectations unneeded in my life because they just add more stress in my life and annoy me to no end," states Anonymous 1.

This came from a friend who particularly has a bad relationship with his parents. Some students think that their parent's expectations help them, but dislike them at the same time. " I think that my parent's expectations help me believe that I can do well and it makes me work harder, but sometimes it becomes too much. Because if I do well, my parents expect me to even better and even if I do well in one spot, they look at a bad spot, which is frustrating," tells Anonymous 4. " I do think that my parent's expectations help me make goals in my life, but I hate it.

At first, I do think they suck, but I do realize that expectations from my parents are not that bad, it is just that they sometimes expect too much out



of me and ticks me off. " says Anonymous 6. From this, parent's expectations do have an impact on their children's lives both negatively and positively. In the end, some students wish to deal with their parent's expectations, but do not know how to do so. In Elizabeth Ryan's, *Straight Talk About Parents*, she recommends talking to your parents on the " rules" or " chores" you have to do and why they bother you.

After all, talking aloud with your parents about your problems with their expectations is definitely a start to compromising. She says that if you want to handle these problems, then start by asking yourself: What are the rules in my family? What are the rules do I think are clear to everyone? Which rules do I think are not clear to everyone? What can I do to get the unclear rules to be clearer? Which rules do I think are fair? Which rules do I think are unfair or unnecessary? Which rule am I the most upset about? Think about your parent's feelings and not just your own, they might only just want the best out of you.

Try to make your parents listen to your reasons on why they are " bad" with their expectations. Instead of always disagreeing and arguing, try to find things to agree on instead of nagging each other. Take note of your own feelings as well as your parents because they might just be taking note of your well-being or future. In case you may not feel like talking to your parents, why not talk to a good friend? Friends should always be there for each other, especially in times of hardship. Talk to your friend about your problems and what they think you should do. If not, just let it out.

Yes, crying is human nature and a way of releasing emotion instead of bottling it up. If you're mad you can just punch the stuffing out of your pillow,

you just might find that you feel better after beating your anger out. Hopefully, parents might one day learn how to balance their expectations to not be too much or too little. It might take a while because, after all, parenting is quite the balancing act. Anonymous 1. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2012. Anonymous 2. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2012. Anonymous 3. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2012. Anonymous 4. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2012.

Anonymous 5. Personal interview. 25 Jan. 2012. Anonymous 6. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2012. Anonymous 7. Personal interview. 26 Jan. 2012. Kazdin, Alan. " Why Can't Johnny Jump Tall Buildings? " Slate. The Slate Group, 2012. Web. 29 Jan. 2012. . " Percentage of Children in Grades 6-12 Whose Parents Expect Them To Receive a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 2003 and 2007. " Chart. N. p. : Child Trends DataBank, 2007. Childs Trends DataBank. Web. 1 Feb. 2012. . Ryan, Elizabeth A. Straight Talk About Parents. New York: New York Facts On File, 1989. Print. Schweitzer, Callie. " Taming the Overachieving Monster. " Parenting Teens Online. iFOS Publishing and Parenting Teens Network. , Jan. 2008. Web. 27 Jan. 2012. . Shizhen, Lu. " Debate: Parental Expectations. " China Daily. China Daily, 1995-2012. Web. 29 Jan. 2012. .