

Teen Overachieving:

Your student may be an overachiever if he/she feels an impulsive need to get perfect grades and be on top of everybody else in his/her class. At first glance, it would seem that being an overachiever is no problem at all. What's wrong with being on top? Is there anything wrong with wanting to be the best? It's perfectly normal to feel that way, however when this desire to be on top affects someone mentally, physically, emotionally and/or socially then it becomes a problem.

The Negative Aspects of Overachieving

1. Loss of focus or passion

Overachievers are often spread quite thin. With only so many hours in the day and so much energy and effort to give, you have to divide your attention among a number of endeavors if you overschedule your time. When you feel pressure to excel in every area, you may lose the chance to discover a genuine personal interest or talent as you attempt to master all your activities. Consequently, you are likely to lose sight of what you truly like and to get less enjoyment from the things you do.

2. Poor physical health

The workload and time constraints of the typical overachiever leave relatively little time for sleep. In fact, sleep deprivation is common among overscheduled students, with many of them sleeping less than six hours per night. Excessively busy kids tend to suffer from poor eating habits, as well. If you don't have the time to sit down to three solid meals per day, you may have to grab food on the go, and such diets are often full of fats and sugar. Teens need sufficient sleep and nourishment to stay physically and mentally strong, so if you have too much to do, you may end up sacrificing your health.

3. Poor mental health

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry states that “school demands and frustrations” and “taking on too many activities or having too high expectations” are the leading causes of teenage stress. The desire to please others, as well as our culture’s clear emphasis on success, is creating a generation of workaholics who are draining themselves mentally and emotionally.

4. Unhealthy self-image

Overachievers often base their feelings of self-worth on their accomplishments. The more they do, and the more they do well, the better they feel about themselves. Reliance on external validation, though, can be extremely harmful. If you focus on grades, test scores, awards, and other external markers of success, you can lose sight of your inner identity. Overachieving frequently causes students to forget that self-worth is measured from within rather than by what others think or say.

5. Problems getting into college

The majority of colleges indicate that they are looking for well-rounded students. Essentially, they prefer applicants who achieve balance among their academic pursuits, their extracurricular activities, and their personal lives. When admissions officers look at resumes, they are attempting to assess leadership, commitment, and integrity. If you're an overachiever, beware. More is not necessarily better.

How to Achieve Balance

1. Do what you like

Sit down and make a list of your commitments. Then, rank them according to how much you enjoy each one. Weed out the activities from which you gain little or no pleasure. Instead, create a schedule of activities that reflects your true interests and passions, and don't be afraid to cut something out or to say no if you're being pressured to stay involved. In the end, you'll be a happier person.

2. Schedule time to relax

If you never have a minute to rest or have fun, you are doing too much. Take a look at your calendar and carve out specific times to ease off your usually hectic pace. All work and no play will end up stressing you out.

3. Take care of yourself, inside and out

Make sure that you eat healthy foods and that you get a sufficient amount of sleep each night. Also, remember that exercise is a necessary ingredient for both a strong body and a strong mind. And when you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, take a break. Most importantly, ask for help when you need it. Parents, friends, teachers, and counselors are all people to turn to if you start to experience burnout.

Informational Websites:

Overachievers, take note! - balance your life so as not to be overwhelmed in college

<http://www.nextstepu.com/articlePage1.aspx?artId=2627>

More overachieving teens being urged to slow down

<http://sparkaction.org/node/26485>

Average Just Doesn't Cut it Anymore

<http://students2oh.org/2008/01/12/average-just-doesnt-cut-it-anymore/>