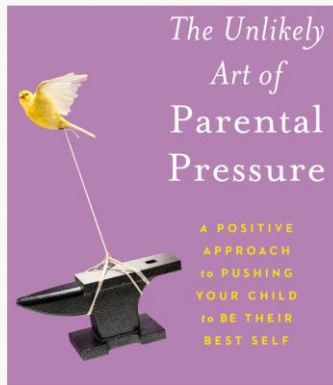


"A TOUR DE FORCE"



Chris Thurber & Hendrie Weisinger
Psychologist & Instructor at Phillips Exeter Academy
New York Times bestselling author of *Performing Under Pressure*

"The Unlikely Art of Parental Pressure is the rare parenting book that respects both parents and children. Instead of simply applauding parental pressure as the key to success or dismissing it as cruel and ineffective, Thurber and Weisinger walk their readers through the theory and practice of parenting happy, successful children. A tour de force."

Abby Freireich & Brian Platzer,
Education columnists for The Atlantic and the authors of *Taking the Stress out of Homework*

Why is it a natural impulse for parents and caregivers to pressure their kids?

It's natural for parents to pressure their kids because they love them. They want the best for them. Millennia ago parental pressure would have had evolutionary utility in so far as it helped children survive long enough to reproduce. Today, parental pressure is a cross-cultural psychological force that comes in both harmful and healthy varieties.

How can we differentiate between healthy and unhealthy pressure?

Healthy pressure has three key elements:

1. **It is child-centered and realistic, not a function of the parent's aspirations.** (When parents seek to meet their own needs via the accomplishments of their child, they are creating harmful parental pressure. It is not the child's job to make parents proud.)
2. **It includes the six Ss of effective praise, criticism that is focused on improvement, and encouragement that emphasizes effort.** (By contrast, harmful pressure includes vapid praise; criticism focused on flaws; and an emphasis on achieving top ranks and perfection above all else.)
3. **It communicates unconditional love.** (When kids perceive their self-worth and their parents' love as contingent on their outstanding performance, they experience harmful pressure, which hurts both mental health and performance.)

Harmful pressure can cause young people to sidestep cultural conventions and ethical behavior in the name of achievement. Lying, cheating, stimulant abuse, competitive fallouts, anxious perfectionism, and a irritable sense of urgency may all have their origins in harmful pressure.

How can adults help kids prevail over societal, peer, and caregiver pressure?

In *The Unlikely Art of Parental Pressure*, we describe eight ways that caregivers can transform themselves from Pressure Parents to Support Parents. In addition, caregivers can be instrumental in attenuating unhealthy pressure from non-parental sources. These include: pressure to adhere to unrealistic beauty standards; pressure to be

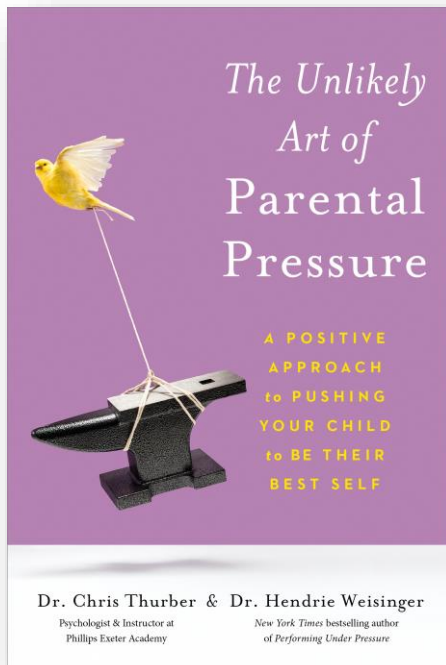
heterosexual; pressure to define success according to name brands (of schools, clothes, places of employment, level of income, etc.); and pressure to follow a traditional career trajectory. We recommend that you...

1. Encourage kids to follow their interests and work hard, not follow a particular recipe for so-called success. *Compare less.*
2. Instill an excellence mindset in kids. Teach them to focus on doing *their* best, rather than to be *the* best. *Rank less.*
3. Lower your kids' sense of urgency. Teach them to relax, to savor experiences, and to be creative. *Panic less.*
4. Teach them to learn from mistakes. Nobody is perfect, nor needs to be. Praise their effort more than the outcome. *Keep Score less.*

Why is empathy important?

Empathy forms a connection with another person, by validating how they are feeling or what they are thinking. Pressure Parents frequently fail to empathize because they equate empathy with agreement, but the two are not the same.

When your child is expressing a strong negative emotion, it doesn't matter whether you agree or disagree with what they are saying...at least at first. Unless they feel understood, they won't listen to your creative solution, wise counsel, or alternate perspective. Support Parents lead with empathy.



THE UNLIKELY ART OF PARENTAL PRESSURE

A Positive Approach to Pushing Your Child To Be Their Best Self

By Dr. Chris Thurber and Dr. Hendrie Weisinger

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