



Here, Chansky and other experts offer advice about how to alleviate some of the pressure—for back-to-school and beyond.



### Dial Down the Demands:

Kids today have heavier workloads, an ever-growing number of extracurriculars, less free time, and more of a sense that what they do now matters for their future, Chansky explains. Help them prioritize by having them pick one or two activities to avoid over-scheduling. And make sure they have some unstructured time every week, preferably away from a screen.



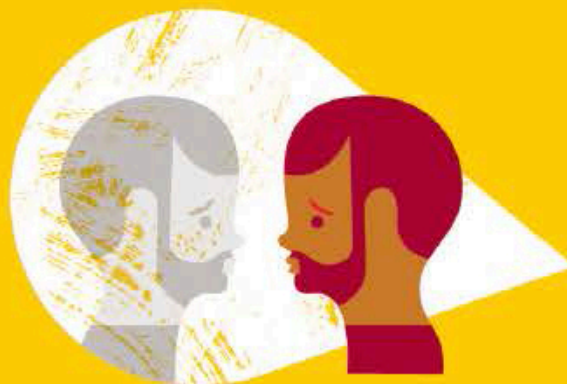
### Make Sure They're Rested:

"When you're not sleeping, your body is flooded with stress hormones," explains child psychologist Lele Diamond, whose Bay Area practice, Symbio, focuses on whole-family mental health. Which means that when exhausted kids face a negative experience, it's doubly hard for them to cope because they're already so stressed. So create a sensible age-based sleep schedule and make sure they stick to it.



### Give Them Previews and Practice:

If anticipating school seems to be the cause of your child's anxiety, take him to see the classroom or arrange to meet the teacher before the year begins, Chansky suggests. Rehearsing the steps of riding the school bus or finding his locker will make those activities less of a scary unknown.



### Check Yourself:

"Kids of people who struggle with anxiety are more prone to follow suit," says Dr. Sanno Zack, who directs the outpatient clinic at Stanford's Early Life Stress and Pediatric Anxiety Program. So it's important that anxious parents be self-aware. If a kid is already worrying about certain things, and the parent is talking about being worried about those same things, then "it's like the kid is hearing it in stereo," Chansky explains.



### Be a Supermodel:

Parents can help model brave behavior and a willingness to make mistakes. "Sharing that they too get nervous and demonstrating what they do to calm themselves and cope—this helps inhibited kids to practice overcoming their own apprehensions," says Zack.



### Guide Them Toward Good Distractions:

Social media, electronics, incessant and instant information—these are alluring distractions. But they carry a certain level of pressure to keep up and can keep kids from connecting to what's most important, says Diamond. Activities like exercise, being in nature, working with your hands, and spending quality time with people you love, by contrast, modulate anxiety by releasing calming feel-good chemicals in the body.



### Help Them Confront the Anxiety Monster:

Parents can be great coaches when they understand the strategies for helping kids beat anxiety, says Zack. The main thing is to gradually help them face whatever they want to avoid: "Learning to confront the anxiety monster is what takes away its power," she explains.

