

## Four Ways To Give Your Kids Life's Ultimate Edge

By Dr. Hendrie Weisinger

If you want to give your kids an edge in life, teach them to perform under pressure. Doing so will be more helpful than giving them an SAT tutor, tennis lessons, or sending them to Europe to broaden their cultural awareness.

The fact is, most kids crumble under pressure ---they perform below their capabilities when they want to do their best. I learned this truth while researching my latest NY Times Best Seller, [Performing Under Pressure](#).

Whether it's taking the SATs, auditioning for a school play, trying out for the tennis team, or having to play their guitar at a family gathering, pressure is apt to worsen your kid's performance. Memory, attention, judgment, decision making, psychomotor skills are all downgraded when they are in a *pressure moment*---a situation in which they have something at stake and the outcome is dependent on their performance.

And if your kids are in grade school or high school, their pressure moments are only going to increase. The APA Monitor, the flagship publication of the American Psychological Association recently reported college students are under more pressure today than ever before to the point that university counseling centers are being overwhelmed by students seeking help.

Handling pressure gives your son or daughter life's ultimate edge because it allows them to perform closest to their abilities, thus increasing their chances of success. Doing your best is no guarantee of success. but for sure, if your kids can't do their best in a pressure moment, they are disadvantaged. Teaching your kids to handle pressure gives them a *mobile skill* they will be able to use throughout their life. Here are four proven tips to *give* them so they can do their best when it matters most.

**1. Befriend The Moment:** Perceiving a pressure moment as threatening – a do or die situation—undermines self- confidence, elicits fear of failure, impairs attention, short -term memory, judgment and spurs impulsive behavior. Teach your kids to think of their pressure moments as an *opportunity, challenge, and fun*. These words are inherent performance steroid and using them ---“The test is an opportunity to show off your knowledge; have fun at your audition”—will help your son or daughter approach the moment with a positive attitude.

**2. Second Chances:** Adolescents and young children typically believe that a pressure moment is their only chance to prove themselves, and thus make the moment the “most important” of their lives; exaggerating the importance increase the pressure they are apt to experience. Teach your children to see their pressure moments—be it a test or sporting event—as just one of many opportunities that will come their way.

**3. Write Off Pressure.** It's the night before your daughter's audition, son's big game, or SATs and they're worried ---how can you help reduce their pressure feelings? Spare the pep talk. Instead

instruct your son or daughter to write out his or her concerns. Worrying diminishes processing power in our brains. A wide body of research shows that writing about your concerns before a pressure moment diminishes worry thoughts enabling your son or daughter to stay focused and do their best. Expressing their concerns in writing will also provide them (and you) with insights about their sources of pressure.

**4. Anticipate, Anticipate, Anticipate.** What if your guitar string breaks in the middle of your audition? What if the test is an essay instead of a multiple choice? Most kids are thrown off course by the unexpected. Teach your kids to anticipate glitches and to mentally rehearse strategies for dealing with them. They will learn to be adaptive in pressure situations, and maintain their composure so they can do their best.

Pressure is an inherent part of life. The sooner you teach your kids how to perform under pressure, the sooner you give them life's ultimate edge.

Hendrie Weisinger, Ph.D. is a world-renowned psychologist, pioneer in the field of pressure management, the originator of criticism training and the author of two New York Times bestselling books. He has consulted with and developed programs for dozens of Fortune 500 Companies and government agencies and has taught in Executive Education and Executive MBA programs at Wharton, UCLA, NYU, Cornell, Penn State, and MIT. His work has been featured several times in national media including The New York Times Sunday Business Section, and numerous publications. His new book and recent NY Times Bestseller is [Performing Under Pressure: The Science Of Doing Your Best When It Matters Most](#). For more information visit [www.drhendrieweisinger.com](http://www.drhendrieweisinger.com). Read more of his work [here](#).