

Parenting *ideas*

INSIGHTS

Building parent-school partnerships

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Help your child conquer self-consciousness

Self-consciousness can make school concerts and end of year events daunting for some students. Here are some ideas to help.

Self-consciousness can be awful. It's the feeling you get that everyone is looking at you. Self-consciousness can come and go.

Often eldest boys when in early primary school are extremely shy and self-conscious. It can make them do silly things. Then self-consciousness revisits later in early adolescence for many boys.

Early teen girls often suffer from it, particularly if they are early or late maturers.

Some kids just hate to do anything in public for fear of being noticed and perhaps laughed at. They think, quite wrongly, that everyone is looking at them. The truth of the matter is that most people aren't looking at them. If they are performing in a school concert most adults have eyes only for their children. They won't really take too much notice of any other children, unless of course, they fluff their lines badly or muck-up big time.

However logical you may be self-consciousness can still hold many kids back. Here are some ideas to help your child or young person conquer self-consciousness:

1 Help them prepare for public performance

They can practise a talk or even rehearse an opening line to help them break the ice in social situations. Practice leads to competence, which often alleviates self-consciousness.

2 Use baby steps in social situations

If they feel uncomfortable meeting a whole bunch of new people, then they can just meet one new friend at a party, rather than try to meet too many people, which can be overwhelming.

3 Practise strong self-talk

Self-conscious kids often have atrocious self-talk. They say everyone is watching them enter a room, when the reality is quite different. Help them develop some realistic and more assertive messages about themselves. "It will be fun going on stage at the concert with my friends" is far more helpful than "Everyone will be staring at me" or "What if I muck up?".

4 Catch kids being brave

What you focus on expands so make sure you highlight kids being brave and overcoming possibly embarrassing situations. Also, let them know that even though they may have stumbled or fluffed a line or two the room didn't cave in. It wasn't so bad.

5 Breathe in, breathe out

Some children and young people can be so debilitated by their self-consciousness that they work themselves into a frenzy with worry. Deep breathing where they count to 3 breathing in, but count to 6 when breathing out will help kids regain calm, control and hopefully perspective.

Self-consciousness is something that many adults suffer from too, so these ideas may hold true for you. It may not be something we can completely eradicate but it is something we all can learn to control so it doesn't stop us, or our kids, doing what we want to do.

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