

Rethinking Happiness

Ask any parent what they most want for their children, and the answer is likely: to become healthy and happy adults. No doubt, this is easier said than done. Most of us recognize that there's no magic formula for happiness, no one-size-fits-all approach to raising a happy child. In spite of ourselves, though, we find ourselves pushing our children down a narrow path of academic success and extracurricular excellence in an effort to secure our vision of their future happiness.

In this approach, many parents will recognize themselves and identify with Kirsten Jones Neff's recent article, [I Wanted My Son to Be Happy But on My Terms](#). Neff posits that, if we want to prepare our children to be happy and thriving adults, we may need to rethink the current formula focusing on achievement and a prestigious college education. Current research shows that today's adolescents are more anxious and depressed than in past generations and that the intense pressure to excel in all facets of life may be doing our children more harm than good. Neff encourages parents to "protect (our children) from the ambient air of stress and the culture of anxiety they are growing up in." Furthermore, she implores parents to "create space for (our kids) to figure out who they are, beyond a list of achievements, and what they love, beyond our approval. We need to acknowledge the successes they value, and also allow for some degree of aimlessness and failure." Great advice and a great read!

The Staples Resilience Project is an ongoing endeavor by the Staples Guidance Department aimed to promote the well-being of our students and foster a positive, inclusive school community.

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