

9 tips for creating a culture of nurture at home

By Dr Andrew Wicking

1. Great homes nurture great souls

Growing up is about much more than just good marks; you can be good at passing the test but be bad at life. Parents need to place an emphasis on imagination, courage, character and empowerment. The attitude your child takes towards learning has life-long consequences.

2. Mistakes are opportunities for growth

Shame causes low motivation. Some kids may reason it is better to opt out than to endure humiliation. Encourage mistake making as a learning experience in the same way scientists use it. Many people say they learn more from their failures than their successes. Use games, quizzes, puzzles, mazes, mysteries, forensic clues and problem-solving games to build a have-a-go mindset in your child.

3. Mindfulness is presence

Mindfulness is about being aware and being present. Now! Create rituals where everyone in the home can stop and bring their energy and awareness into the present. To get great outcomes we need to lessen anxiety. We can achieve this by focusing less on the results and more on awareness and commitment.

4. Relaxation and Focusing Methods

Ensure your child uses relaxation and focusing methods. These include guided relaxation, breathing exercises, creative problem solving, yoga, drama games, visualisation, art, sport, chanting. Relaxation and focusing are not always passive or quiet. Exercise, sports and rhythmic activities energise and focus brains.

5. Resilience based coaching

Use the increased presence of mind and focus to empower students to develop skills through resilience-based coaching. In resilience-based coaching everyone at home - parents and children - are asked to take on an area to improve upon each week or each term.

Use our Resilient Youth Parent free resources found at www.resilientyouth.org to inspire you.

6. Have a dedicated study area for your child

Creative, independent thinking is often harder in noisy distracting circumstances.

7. Use new relaxation and focusing apps

There are some wonderful apps that can be used to aid relaxation and focusing.

8. Teach your child about how their brains works

When young people learn about how their brain works, they have a choice. Learning about what drives anxiety and how to shift your gears down is useful information.

Also learning that you can't believe all of your thoughts and some of your feelings helps young people to start thinking about their 'thinking' rather than just being a victim of the latest idea that flies into their head.

We all need good refreshing sleep to learn well. It is a revelation to some people that if you start your day either by denying yourself some fuel, or by having a few energy drinks and a bowl of chips, you might feel like something has crawled into your head and died there by mid-morning.

Anxiety is a sign of an overloaded brain. It is toxic to creativity and memory. Learning the signs of stress and knowing what to do to come back to a state of relaxed focus is a skill everyone needs.

9. Put fun back into learning

Little kids move, play, explore and question. Then they are told to sit down and do some hard work called learning. When we put the playfulness back into learning, motivation and engagement increase and performance improves dramatically.

When students are encouraged to take risks, play, create and learn, neuro-plasticity increases. If we combine this with good sleep, nutrition and enough physical movement, learning outcomes soar.

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