

The Pressured Child: Freeing Our Kids from Performance Overdrive and Helping Them Find Success in School and Life

Michael Thompson Ph.D.



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The push for students to excel at school and get into the best colleges has never been more intense. In this invaluable new book, the bestselling co-author of *Raising Cain* addresses America's performance-driven obsession with the accomplishments of its kids–and provides a deeply humane response.

"How was school?" These three words contain a world of desire on the part of parents to know what their children are learning and experiencing in school each day. Children may not divulge much, but psychologist Michael Thompson suggests that the answers are there if we know how to read the clues and-equally important-if we remember our own school days.

School, Thompson reminds us, occupies more waking hours than kids spend at home; and school is full not just of studies but of human emotion–excitement, fear, envy, love, anger, sexuality, boredom, competitiveness. Through richly detailed interviews, case histories, and student e-mail journals, including those of his own children, Thompson illuminates the deeper psychological journey that school demands, a journey that all children must take in order to grow and develop, whether they are academic aces or borderline dropouts. Most of us remember this journey, if we are honest with ourselves, but our children must experience it in their own way, for better or worse.

In stories that are by turns poignant, shocking, uplifting, and inspiring, we see students grapple with the textured reality of their lives, devising their own unique strategies to survive and thrive in school. For parents, this book reveals the hidden emotional landscape of the school day and points toward the answers we both desire and dread as we seek to help our children find success in school and beyond. Bridging the worlds of the growing and the grown-up, and told in Thompson's compassionate voice as both psychologist and father, *The Pressured Child* shows us how to listen for the truth of our children's experience–and how to trust, love, and ultimately let go of a child. It is a crucial book for our stressful age–and an ideal resource for families struggling to survive it.

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