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## Help kids stay resilient in face of nonstop competition

By Nancy Churnin - Dallas Morning News

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To what extent does the competition and pressure heaped on today's kids help or hurt them?

In 2007, an attorney and first-time filmmaker, Vicki Abeles, based in San Francisco, crafted a documentary, "Race to Nowhere," in response to concern at seeing her 12-year-old daughter suffer panic attacks and a stress-induced illness in the face of nonstop academic pressure.

In a 2010 article for Psychology Today, Dr. Peter Gray, professor emeritus at Boston College and author of the widely used "Psychology" textbook, suggested a connection between the dramatic rise of anxiety and depression in children and adolescents with the decline in play and rise in schooling.

Last year, Dr. Deborah Stipek, dean of the school of education at Stanford, wrote an editorial in Science describing the cheating and lack of joy in learning she sees in high school students, a problem she blames on the pressures they face.

To help navigate these challenges, The Dallas Morning News convened a panel of five experts who work with children and young adults.

These experts emphasized the role that parents can play in helping their children become more resilient.

Panelist Kathleen Fischer, a family and parenting coach and self-published author of "Simple But NOT Easy: Regaining Balance in Our Family Life," said there's one key question for a child to answer: "Is it for others' sake or because it satisfies something in me?"

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### Key question

- When it comes to pressure, one expert said the key question for a child to answer about the sport or activity is: "Is it for others' sake or because it satisfies something in me?" If children measure their worth in how much they please others, when they fail to please – by flunking a test, by losing a game, by a rejection for a coveted program or school – they may feel worthless.

- Children also need to be shown respect when they struggle. "Try harder" is not always the answer.

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