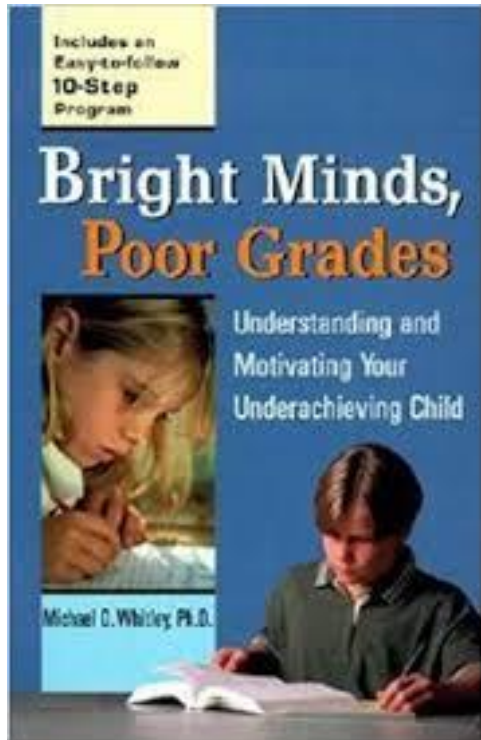


Bright Minds, Poor Grades

Understanding and Motivating Your Underachieving Child

Written By: Michael D. Whitley, Ph.D.

The book is all about underachievers and motivating them into change. Dr. Whitley identifies the different kinds of underachievers, and gives practical solutions for change.



An Underachiever In Action



Characteristics of Underachievers

- ▶ Bright - just lacks effort and self discipline
- ▶ Lack Persistence even when there is a desire to do well
- ▶ A chronic problem (won't go away on it's own)
- ▶ Most likely is occurring in more than one area of life
- ▶ Doesn't engage in mundane or ordinary tasks
- ▶ Failure to take responsibility for self/actions and make excuses to stay irresponsible

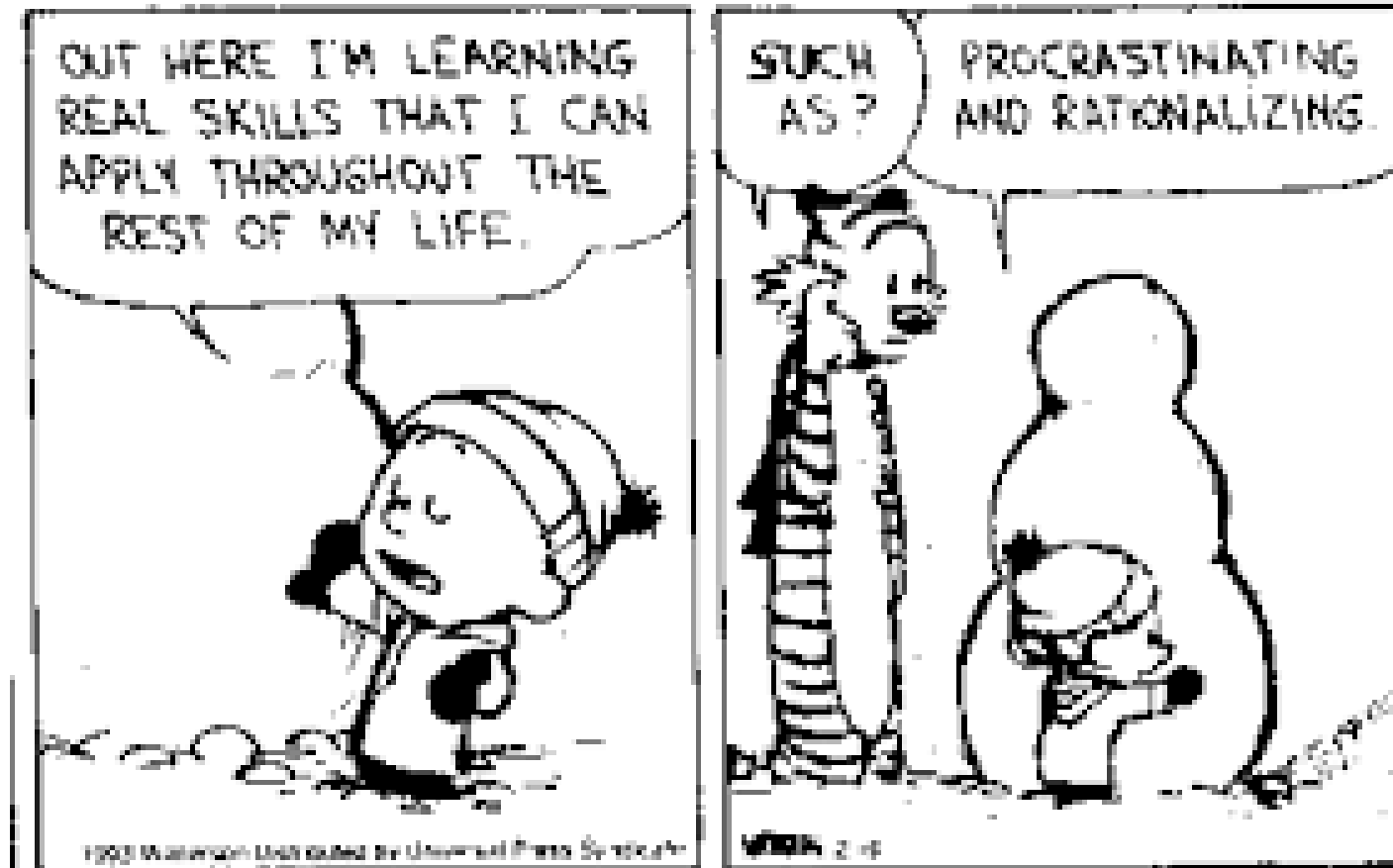
Characteristics of Underachievers Continued...

- ▶ Lack insight of self and make decisions that consequently cause failure
- ▶ Desire for short term gratification vs. long term sacrifice
- ▶ Unable to sustain independence in their work ethic
- ▶ Dishonest with themselves and others

The Six Types of Underachievers

- ▶ The Procrastinator
- ▶ The Hidden Perfectionist
- ▶ The Martyr
- ▶ The Shy Type
- ▶ The Socialite
- ▶ The Con Artist

The Procrastinator



The Procrastinators...

- ▶ make excuses for failure and tend to project an image of helplessness
- ▶ Provokes to anger or frustrate and then feel abused when others respond in anger
- ▶ Have little insight to how they cause their own problems
- ▶ Often learn this behavior from one or more of the parents
- ▶ The core of motivational difficulties are the self-defeating beliefs about anger and expressing feelings and needs

Procrastinators

Causes

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Change Goals

- ▶ There are two major goals
- ▶ One: Help children learn healthier ways to express anger and aggressive behavior
- ▶ Two: Parents change their parenting style
- ▶ Patience and persistence are key
- ▶ Help child create balance for dependency and appropriate boundaries and limits

The Hidden Perfectionist



The Hidden Perfectionist...

- ▶ Is often not a perfectionist in their work, but to the contrary is often quite messy and disorganized
- ▶ Spends so much time preparing to begin and yet can't quite get there
- ▶ Resent the unspoken expectations of parents and teachers and as a result, believe that they won't live up to those ideals
- ▶ Are often stubborn, controlling of others, indecisive, compulsive, and struggle with expressing feelings; Self-discouraging
- ▶ Mask insecurities with arrogance and is rigid and moralistic
- ▶ Masks the perfectionism with underachievement

Perfectionists

Causes

- ▶ Secretly terrified of others seeing them as weak.
- ▶ Fear of judgment as seen as inadequate.
- ▶ Compulsion to follow rules and need to make others follow too.
- ▶ Overly seek approval of others

Change Goals

- ▶ Help them recognize their inner conflict and find ways to regulate the conflicts.
- ▶ Strengthen ability to understand feelings, set goals, make realistic decisions.
- ▶ Release feelings of perceived pressures they inflict upon themselves and the feelings of revenge seeking behavior.

The Martyr



I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT I HAD
A REAL CHANCE TO MARTYR MYSELF
HERE, AND I JUST LET IT SLIP AWAY.

The Martyr...

- ▶ Exhibit self-defeating behavior
- ▶ Rejects help, but is willing to help others achieve and accomplish
- ▶ Will do even less when someone offers support
- ▶ Is the most disturbed personality and motivational pattern associated with underachievement
- ▶ Is often a depressed individual
- ▶ Can not handle being successful because it makes them feel insecure

Martyrs

Causes

- ▶ Parenting a child in a dominating or punitive way.
- ▶ Bonding takes place during the discipline and feel insecure on their own.
- ▶ Parent attention is only negative,
- ▶ A negative link forms between pleasure and success and as a result, anxiety and discomfort forms.

Change Goals

- ▶ Breaking ties of the martyr and the dominant other.
- ▶ Changing patterns is scary because of the intensity of emotional feelings which could result in thoughts of suicide.
- ▶ teachers and parents need to understand the limits when offering help and need to just remain available. Someone offering help must be strong and confident to endure for an extended period of time.

The Shy Type

SHY BATMAN



FIGHTING CRIME AND SOCIAL ANXIETY

The Shy Type...

- ▶ Are very concerned about being embarrassed, judged, or humiliated
- ▶ Sensitive and can't handle criticism
- ▶ Have a strong fear of disapproval or failure
- ▶ Have very few friends
- ▶ Lack adjustments to change of any kind
- ▶ Are prone to daydreaming and lack focus
- ▶ Can develop such an intense phobia to school, which could result in an anxiety attack when in close proximity to the school building.
- ▶ Will most likely have phobic tendencies in many areas of life
- ▶ May live a lonely life with little contact with others

Shy Types

Causes

- ▶ When parents pushed at an early age for children to be mature beyond their abilities.
- ▶ Children feel shame at an early age and don't want future humiliation.
- ▶ Opposite parenting of the overly protective parent can cause feeling of helplessness.
- ▶ Children learn to hide their true feelings at a very young age as a way to avoid shame and humiliation.

Change Goals

- ▶ First, a child has to commit to being helped.
- ▶ Parents have to be committed to making effective changes and let go of controlling and overprotecting.
- ▶ Parents must let go of their own fears of embarrassment and move forward in getting help for their child.
- ▶ Two potential mistakes: pushing to fast and overly protect because this would further heighten the original problem already created.

The Socialite



The Socialite...

- ▶ Loves to socialize and cares very little about achievement
- ▶ They only like school for the friendship opportunity
- ▶ Often takes on the role of class clown
- ▶ hides feelings of anxiety and self-doubt
- ▶ Seeks approval, attention, and praise from others, so much as to let own interests go
- ▶ Is often self-centered and egocentric
- ▶ Easily becomes bored and seeks instant gratification
- ▶ See studying and reading to be a waste of time
- ▶ Is competitive and will often alienate peers

Socialites

Causes

- ▶ Learned to hide their feelings to gain approval from others.
- ▶ Early in life a child may develop oversensitivity to attention from their parents.
- ▶ They seek approval from their parents and hide true feelings to get it.
- ▶ Their lack of confidence to handle the pressures of life.
- ▶ They begin to act the way they think others see them.

Change Goals

- ▶ They need someone who is willing to help them explore their suppressed feelings.
- ▶ If they can truly explore and come to an understanding about their feelings, they have a chance to be an asset to their family and the community.
- ▶ If changes aren't made, they will only further deepen their dysfunction in relationships and as a result will effect achievement in life.

The Con Artist



The Con Artists...

- ▶ Are the most difficult for teachers and parents to understand
- ▶ Are charming and appear confident
- ▶ Don't want to have to work for anything because of sense of entitlement
- ▶ Will punish with anger or silence when demands aren't met
- ▶ Are great manipulators
- ▶ Will not respond positively to any type of behavior contract
- ▶ Believe they are better than others, but eventually when all fails what is left is emptiness and depression.
- ▶ Are usually lonely individuals because they can't relate to the feelings of other, they only manipulate their feelings.
- ▶ Are great at making bargains and trying to get others to do their work for them.

Con Artists

Causes

- ▶ They have an overdeveloped fantasy about their self worth and what they can actual level of achievement.
- ▶ They over exaggerate and brag due to a low self-esteem.
- ▶ Parents may be overprotective and set very few limits, or allow the child do have no limits at all.
- ▶ They are great manipulators and get talk themselves out of anything.

Change Goals

- ▶ There is a need for confronting the issues of fantasy vs. reality.
- ▶ Helpful change doesn't come quickly. Parents and teachers must stay committed.
- ▶ Consistent eternal discipline is necessary for change to happen.
- ▶ Sometimes, it's the parents must change before change can happen for the child.

Common Mistakes: Parents and Educators Make

- ▶ **Logic:**
 - ▶ It doesn't work because they understand, they just are motivated to do it.
- ▶ **The Carrot and the stick:**
 - ▶ This is a way that parents control children to do what they want them to do. This teaches a child to work for reward and not for the right reasons.
- ▶ **Tutoring and other educational approaches:**
 - ▶ It's not that they don't have the skills, it's just that they don't feel motivated.
- ▶ **Let them suffer the consequences:**
 - ▶ Letting them suffer won't teach them a lesson. It won't change behavior. Behaviors of underachievement don't change on their own.

Ten Step Program: Helping Children Get Back on Track

- ▶ 1. Establish values of honesty, trust, and truth.
- ▶ 2. Set long-term and short-term goals.
- ▶ 3. Explore how goals will be achieved.
- ▶ 4. Select one problem and explore your child's perspective.
- ▶ 5. Link child's problem to goal attainment or failure.
- ▶ 6. Help your child make concrete plans to solve achievement problems.
- ▶ 7. Redefine success and failure as following his own plans - analyze the decisions he must make to succeed or fail.
- ▶ 8. Initiate introspection - explore conflicts and feelings about following his plans.
- ▶ 9. Cement Commitments to follow through on plans.
- ▶ 10. Perform follow-up and a sequence analysis of his specific decisions to succeed or fail.

Change...

- ▶ It won't happen over night.
- ▶ It's a process.
- ▶ It takes patience and commitment.
- ▶ It's worth the time and effort!!!