

Positive+Parent™ Newsletter

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HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD WHEN THEY ARE FEELING OVERWHELMED

“When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved, you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better.”

Unknown

Last year, when my sister-in-law came to visit from Los Angeles, my little one missed a few days of fifth grade. While missing a few days of fifth grade is hardly the end of the world, he did have a feeling of being overwhelmed when he was trying to make up the work that he had missed.

So what is the best way to help your child when they are feeling overwhelmed?

Jack Canfield's advice from his book [The Success Principles](#) which is aimed at adults, applies equally to kids in this case. His first piece of advice is to “chunk it down”. What this meant for my son was rather than look at all the homework he had to do, first we looked at the math homework that he had to do, then the English homework, then the history and the science. We then broke it down further to two different sections of math homework and an English essay and some workbook pages. It sure looks a lot more manageable when you look at it that way!

The next idea we used was an idea I heard that

was used by a old-time copywriter. He used to set an egg-timer for 33 minutes when he was working. He would work for 33 minutes, then take a break. I didn't expect my 5th grader to work for 33 minutes, but we figured he could work for 15 minutes straight and then take a 10 minute break. Again, this helps to cut down on the feeling of overwhelm because all he has to do is work for 15 minutes. The he gets to take a break. That is not too bad.

Finally, this was not a one-day project so we also broke up all the work based on when he would get it done. We knew that on his “kung-fu” day, he would not really have a chance to get a lot of work done, but on his “early-day”, the day he gets out at 1:30, he would have a chance to do 4 or 5 of his 15-,minute sessions. This is actually similar to short-term goals (the homework to get finished today) and long-term goals (catch up on all the homework).

By breaking it up this way, he finished all the work in less than a week while keeping up with newly assigned work.

So what should you do if your child is overwhelmed? Step one would be to “chunk it down” - break it into smaller pieces. Step two is to break up their work period into manageable times with breaks scheduled in. Step three is to schedule work times so that it gets done.

By the way – this strategy works very well for adults as well!

