



# Help them conquer anything!

As another school year draws to a close, kids can suddenly find themselves off balance as end-of-school worries build and start-of-summer anticipations loom. The good news: You can ensure your child sails smoothly through this transition with these proven self-esteem boosters.

## Restore resilience

Junior has been playing ball ever since he could hold a bat, but at his last game his outfield flub cost his team the win. Now he's convinced he's *the* worst player ever. To renew your son's faith in himself, teach him the *Prithvi Mudra*: With one or both hands, have him press the tips of his thumb and ring finger together while taking a few deep breaths. Mudras, or finger yoga, help soothe the nervous system by unblocking negative energy in the body, explains Baron Baptiste, yoga expert and author of *My Daddy is a Pretzel* (Barefoot Books). "The Prithvi Mudra is known in ancient practices to ease stress, as well as improve mental focus." These benefits make it perfect for instilling calm and optimism.

## Curb anxiety

Is she feeling so frazzled that she fears she'll forget how to conjugate every verb on her upcoming French final? To ease her pretest jitters, serve up a breakfast that includes oatmeal, whole-wheat

toast or bananas. These foods are high in glutamine, an amino acid that the body uses to synthesize GABA, a neurotransmitter that eases nervousness and promotes relaxation. "When levels of GABA are low, one can feel anxious and tense and have trouble sleeping," says Hyla Cass, M.D., coauthor of *8 Weeks to Vibrant Health* (Take Charge Books, 2008). "But when levels increase, heart rate slows and muscles relax." Add proteins and essential fatty acids to a carb-rich breakfast and by test time, her conjugation abilities will be *très bien*.

## Relieve uncertainty

Your daughter is afraid she'll have to spend the summer alone now that her best friend is at sleepaway camp for two months. Suggest that whenever she's flooded with feelings of fear she repeat the mantra *I can change the way I think to change the way I feel*. "Everyone has an internal or external locus of control—that's where you decide who's in charge of what's happening to you," explains Bonnie Zucker, Psy.D., author of *Anxiety-Free Kids* (Prufrock Press, 2008). When the locus of control is external, one feels hopeless to change a situation. Repeating the mantra shifts the locus to internal, helping her realize that there are ways to make things better. She'll naturally take action, like joining a club, to ease loneliness.

## handy info

### Average age that kids appreciate Mom: 22

So reports a U.K. research firm, which surveyed 5,000 families.

**The specifics:** Over 50 percent of young adults said they missed having their parents look after them once they left home, and almost 20 percent said it took going to college for them to realize how much parents do for them. But it's not until they reach their mid-twenties that children actually take their parents' advice.

SOURCE: OnePoll.com



### It's official: Happiness is contagious

This from researchers at Harvard University and The University of California at San Diego. They found that happiness spreads through social networks, and a person's likelihood of being content increases by 15 percent for every cheery friend she has. **Surprising:** The effect extends beyond a person's immediate circle—for every happy friend of a friend, the likelihood of "catching" the emotion jumps by 10 percent.

SOURCE: *British Medical Journal*, 2008

## SMILE FILE



"How do you expect me to find anything when you put it all where it's supposed to be?"