

Questions & Answers

Q: My fifth grader has never been a bubbly child. But in the last year, she has become so negative. Nothing is ever right. She doesn't like school. She doesn't like her teacher. Last week, I asked her to plan something special for the two of us to do. Later, she said it was "All right, I guess." I'm losing patience. What can I do?

A: Parents want their kids to be happy. And it is draining to be around someone who is always down in the dumps.

Here are some steps to take:

- Listen to your daughter. Ask her to tell you about things that get her down. If there is one issue (or person) that comes up over and over, you may have hit on the problem. Brainstorm ways she can address the situation.
- Let her complain. It's OK to let her complain once in a while. If she whines about homework, let her go for a minute or two. Then redirect her by saying, "Well, you still need to finish it before school tomorrow." Remind her that everyone has responsibilities—whether they like them or not.
- Model the attitude you'd like her to have. Try to be positive when you are faced with disappointments. Say things like, "I'm bummed I have to work on Saturday, but it will feel great to get this project finished!"
- Realize you aren't responsible for fixing everything in your child's life. Help her take responsibility where you can. It's a way of empowering her.
- Make an appointment with your child's doctor. If you think she may be anxious or depressed, it's important to take action now.

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