

## The Many Different Faces of Underachieving Students. Misguided Beliefs

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📖 3 minute read

Underachievers are a diverse group, each with their unique patterns of behaviours and beliefs that hold them back. These students don't fit into a single mould, but they often share certain misconceptions contributing to their struggles. Understanding these varied patterns can help us better support each underachieving student's individual needs.

### TYPES OF UNDERACHIEVERS

#### Rebellious/Aggressive Type

- These students have a "You can't make me do this" attitude.
- They want to do what they please and often clash with authority, especially over homework.
- This behaviour might stem from their upbringing, a feisty temperament, or both.
- They often use poor school performance to "punish" their parents for perceived wrongs.

#### Immature/Dependent/Anxious Type

- These students are emotionally immature and overly reliant on adults.
- They frequently seek approval and reassurance from parents and teachers.
- In class, they constantly ask questions and need validation, which hinders their independence and willingness to try new challenges.

#### Helpless-Discouraged-Depressed Type

- These students might have started school a bit immature, have limited academic aptitude, or have a learning disability.
- They quickly fall behind and receive less positive reinforcement for their efforts.
- Over time, they develop a negative self-view and low academic self-confidence, seeing little point in trying.

#### Perfectionistic Type

- Underachieving can become a sub-culture among young people.
- Students might see peers, like Bart Simpson from "The Simpsons," who don't value schoolwork and feel pressure not to value it.
- Starting as early as middle primary grades, there can be significant peer pressure not to do schoolwork to fit in.
- Some students avoid schoolwork for fun, while others fear peer rejection if they achieve it.

#### Peer Conforming Type

- These students set incredibly high standards for themselves, believing they must do everything perfectly to be successful.
- When they fear they won't meet these standards, they might avoid trying altogether, rationalising, "I didn't really try, so that's why it isn't perfect."
- They can waste a lot of time because they fear making mistakes.
- They tend to excel in areas where they're already strong but avoid areas where they might not be perfect.

#### Low Frustration Tolerance Type

- Many underachievers struggle with normal frustration levels, but some have extremely low tolerance.
- These students are sometimes labelled "lazy." They dislike hard or boring schoolwork but succeed in other areas.
- They might have a temperament prone to frustration, worsened by overprotective or permissive parenting.
- They often think, "Life should be fun all the time. I can't be bothered with this. It's too hard."
- They are typically disorganised, missing deadlines and losing track of assignments.

#### Non-Achievement/Peter Pan Syndrome

- These good-natured students do everything possible to avoid schoolwork.
- They fear that succeeding in school will reveal their true capabilities, leading to unwanted responsibilities and less fun.
- They prefer to stay in a perpetual state of avoidance, much like Peter Pan, who does not want to grow up.

### MISGUIDED BELIEFS OF UNDERACHIEVING STUDENTS

Many underachieving students hold false beliefs that hinder their ability to work to their full potential. These beliefs often originate from their parents' outlook and behaviour. Here are a few fundamental beliefs that need addressing:

#### "Everything Will Turn Out OK Whether I Work or Not."

**Belief:** Students think they can avoid work and still be okay.

**Behaviour:** These students often miss deadlines and rely on extended deadlines or makeup exams.

**Origin:** This belief can stem from overindulgent parenting, where children are rewarded without effort. Parents might constantly bail their children out, reinforcing the idea that everything will be okay without hard work.

#### "Everything Should Be Entertaining and Enjoyable and There Should Be No Unpleasantness Whatsoever

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#### "Doing Well in School Would Betray My Friends."

**Belief:** These students think excelling academically will make them lose their friends.

**Behaviour:** They might fail on purpose to fit in, even if their friends don't care about grades.

**Origin:** This belief often stems from feeling alienated by their parents' values and wanting to rebel by aligning with peers with different standards.

#### "Following Rules is Demeaning and Dishonourable."

**Belief:** Some students see cooperating with authority as an attack on their integrity.

**Behaviour:** They often reject rules in hostile ways and engage in non-conforming behaviours.

**Origin:** This attitude can come from feeling powerless at home. If parents can't enforce rules, these students feel they can do whatever they want without consequence.

#### "Nothing I Do at School Will Ever Benefit Me."

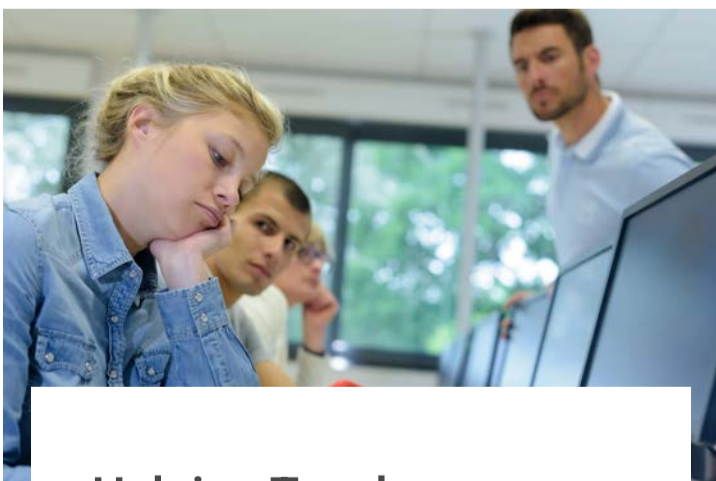
**Belief:** Some students believe that school efforts won't help them.

**Behaviour:** They tend to perform poorly from the start and might go unnoticed by teachers.

**Origin:** This mindset is often found in lower socio-economic families where high academic expectations and the value of effort are not emphasised.

Addressing these beliefs can help educators and parents help students overcome their tendencies to underachieve and reach their full potential.

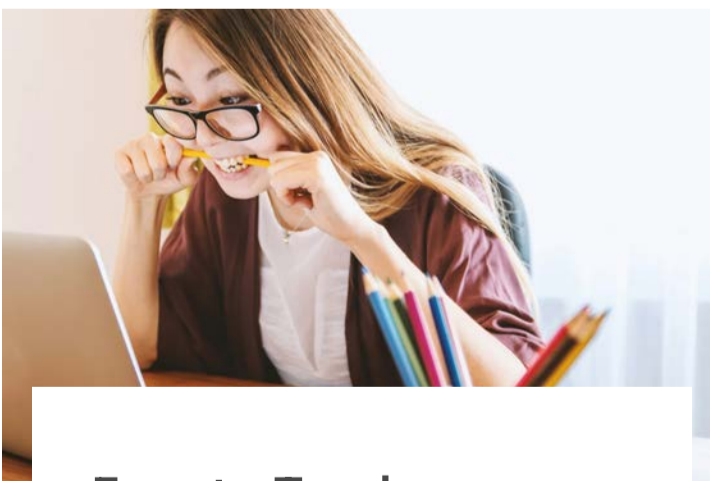
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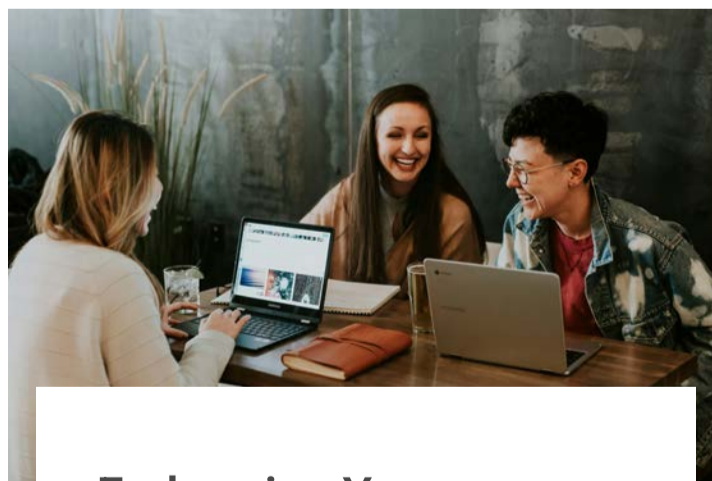
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