



Health and Fitness News
From the T/E Physical Education Department
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Are Your Kids Overscheduled?

The idea of kids and families being too busy is a hot topic, and one with mixed reviews. While there is some research that has been done on this topic, scientists agree that more is needed. According to the Society for Research in Child Development, between 70% and 83% of American children and teens claim to take part in at least one extracurricular pursuit. These children and teenagers are spending an average of five to nine hours per week in structured activities. The SRCD also indicates that only 5% to 7% of children and teens are putting in 20 hours or more in a week to these extracurricular activities. Jean Twenge, a professor of psychology at San Diego State University states “Are kids really overscheduled? It’s not the average experience, but that doesn’t mean it’s not a problem.” (Salamon, March 31, 2011) Being significantly overscheduled can lead a person to have higher levels of stress and anxiety, in addition to leading to trouble sleeping.

So why are kids so busy? There could be a number of reasons that families and kids are so busy now. According to an article on the KidsHealth.org website, for some families the kids may be asking to participate in a number of things as to not feel left out from activities that other children are doing. Perhaps teenagers feel some pressure to have a wide variety of activities in an effort to get into a choice college. It may also be that some parents want their child to have a wide variety of experiences and don’t want to feel that their child will miss out on anything that other kids might be doing. Regardless of the reason, most families just want what is best for their child. Even with the best of intentions, it is important to ensure that you and your child do not feel pressured or overscheduled. (Gavin, September 2008)

So what can you do? First, talk to your child. See how they are feeling. While every child is different, some signs that your child may be too busy include:

- Feeling tired, anxious or depressed
- Complaining of headaches or stomachaches – these could be due to feelings of stress, missing a meal, or a lack of sleep
- Falling behind in their work; dropping grades

Ask your child how they are feeling and how they are coping with their schedule. If they are participating in an activity that they don’t really enjoy going to, perhaps this can be cut back some to allow more room in their schedule.

Second, exercise is important for the whole family. Exercising is a great way to relieve stress, so be a role model and make exercise a priority in your house. Show your children that you enjoy being active and try to find fun things to do as a family like going on a walk, bike ride or a hike.

Additionally, try to set aside some family time. Make an effort to have dinner as a family. This can be tough especially with work and practice schedules, but eating together is a nice way to stay connected as a family. Perhaps your family can make an effort to play a board game or card game together. Try to find something your family can participate in and relax on a regular basis. Be flexible with when this can occur, but don’t be willing to give this time up. It is important for your family to spend some time together and stay connected!

Resources

Gavin, Mary. “Is Your Child Too Busy?”

http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat_id=10007&article_set=21928 . September, 2008.

Lyness, D’Arcy. “Stress” http://kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=207&cat_id=20124&article_set=20400 . August, 2010

Pappas, Stephanie. “Busy Kids: Overscheduling Worries Overstated”

<http://www.livescience.com/13642-kids-overscheduled-extracurricular-activities.html> April 10, 2011.

Salamon, Maureen. “Are Some Kids Overscheduled?”

<http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=142551&pf=3&page=1> Thursday, March 31, 2011