



Are Children More Over Scheduled and Tired Now?



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Parents try to give children every opportunity available. By doing so, the result can be over scheduling, over “busyness”, and loss of family time. Have you ever noticed how many children need daily planners to manage their schedules including soccer, hockey, piano, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, baseball, football, gymnastics, dance, violin, band, craft clubs, foreign language classes, academic enrichment courses and religious activities? While each of these activities has benefits, it can end up causing children to have less free time, less time to connect with family, and less time to engage in play and exploration on their own.

Parents want what is best for their children. Even when intentions are good, a child can easily become overscheduled. Well-intentioned parents can feel obligated to “keep up” with other children’s activities and achievements. Parents may feel their child will be left behind if they are not involved in everything available. This can result in family life revolving around children’s extra curricular activities rather than the activities revolving around family time.

Organized activities and sports are beneficial for children for a number of reasons. They foster social skills and provide opportunities for play and exercise. Cultural enrichment and sportsmanship are taught. Discipline and conflict resolution are learned. And most importantly, the activities and sports are fun! The most important goal should be to keep it fun and make sure kids and parents do not become overwhelmed and frustrated because of the schedule.

Remember, it is important to have a balance of activities that includes “down time” for your family to connect!

Tips for busy families:

- Designate one night each week to hold a family meeting
- Re-evaluate family priorities and develop a plan to honor them
- Keep a calendar to help stay organized
- Carpool with other families
- Try to balance activities for children—and yourself!
- Know when to say “no”!
- Do not forget the importance of “down time”
- Plan ahead for family time and meals together





Dan Dedloff, MA,LPC has the privilege to work with teens at Family and Children's Services. As coordinator for Youth Services he has learned about relating and connecting with young people. He offers the following suggestions for parents who may be struggling to adapt to their adolescent child's changing needs in creating a teen friendly home.

Friends often become like a second family to your son or daughter during teen years. If given the choice between their family and friends, most teens choose their friends. The process of pulling away from family and strengthening connections with friends is a developmental milestone of adolescence. By creating a teen friendly home, your teen and their friends will want to "hang out" there, allowing you to stay in tune with their activities and know that they are happy, safe and enjoying positive activities.

Here is a secret - you are allowed to talk with your teen's friends. Be open and friendly to the different personality types your child may choose as friends. Some young people will actively engage in conversation with you while others may prefer minimal contact. Be flexible and accept whatever level of relationship occurs.

Pay attention to details about each friend. Remember their names, the names of their parents, and other important or unique facts. Make yourself available to be a good listener and seek to understand where each teen is coming from. With each conversation comes more opportunity to provide a good influence.

Don't drop the rules! Maintain a balance between setting limits and knowing when to "take it easy". Have clear expectations of how your teen and their friends are allowed to act. Keep in mind to "not sweat the small stuff". This can go a long way in creating an environment that is fun and safe for teens!



● ● 10 Tips for Talking with Teens ● ● ● ● ● ●

1. Seek first to understand—be quiet and listen
2. Paraphrase with a check for accuracy
3. Use "I" statements when communicating
4. Share how you felt as an adolescent
5. Talk about subjects that interest your teen
6. Respect your teenager
7. Respect their friendships
8. Admit your mistakes
9. Let teens help make decisions—pick your battles
10. Communicate to your teen how much you love them.



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National Family Week, November 2009 Honoring Connections that Strengthen Families in Midland!

FCS will again be sponsoring the 3rd annual National Family Week allowing the people of Midland the opportunity to honor the connections that support and strengthen families. This year's theme, *Connections Count* embraces the premise that children live better lives when they have strong families that connect them to economic opportunities, social networks and services. FCS, in partnership with other community agencies, is planning several special activities in the Midland area. Dates, locations and times will be published in the Midland Daily News as the event nears.

Additionally, National Family Week Advocacy awards are given each year to one professional and one community member who contributed to advocacy efforts on behalf of vulnerable children and families. Nomination forms are now available on the FCS website at www.fcs-midland.org.



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