



Is More Better?

Extracurricular Activities & Enrichment

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In recent decades, there has been increasing pressure for parents to involve their children in more extracurricular activities including tutoring, sports, dance, art classes, etc. This drive comes from necessity due to needing after-school care and also the competitive nature of getting into school and college.

As parents, we want to make sure we are nurturing our children's interests and talents. We want to provide our children with what they need to be successful and happy. Parents often have an innate and deep-rooted fear of not nurturing talent or providing the right opportunities for their children. It is hard sometimes as parents not to play the "what if..." game. What if my child does not get into a good college because I didn't provide music lessons? What if my child would have been an amazing baseball player and recruited to an Ivy League college if we had continued with club soccer?

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To make things even more challenging, our children are often amazing at many different things. They have a myriad of interests and talents and sometimes struggle with setting limits for themselves. It is tempting to allow them to pursue all of their interests.

Therefore, all too often children are going from one activity to the next with very little time and space to allow them to slow down and just be. However, although children are resilient and adaptable. There is a balance in providing activities for our children and overscheduling them.



Benefits of Extracurricular Activities

The balance between doing too much and not enough is a tricky one to navigate and there is no magical formula for parents.

Although there are pitfalls to overscheduling, there is also a multitude of benefits to providing extracurricular activities for your children. Supporting your child's interests can help to grow and develop skills in an area of interest, and create bonds and connections between like-minded peers. It can also provide structure and routine, build healthy time management skills, and help to limit screen time.

Further, grit can be fostered by engaging children in extracurricular activities. Grit is the ability to have passion and perseverance for long-term and meaningful goals despite obstacles and distractions. Grit in turn is related to the development of higher self-esteem, improved academic performance, and resilience. Committing to an extracurricular activity for over a year has been positively correlated with long-term benefits for children including graduation rates, salary, and employment.





The Downside

Unfortunately, there are also pitfalls related to having too many activities. This can take a toll on parents and children. When children are too overscheduled they are more prone to anxiety, irritability, tiredness, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Children require time and space to observe the world around them and process all the new information they take in on a daily basis. In addition to the stress children experience, parents are also often stressed by having to be in more places at once than is physically possible or healthy.

Many parents can relate to frantic daily schedules that start from the moment school is dismissed and end at bedtime. This often includes eating a snack and changing in the car while driving to multiple different locations for a variety of activities including classes, tutoring, sports practice, etc. Then dinner, homework, and bed at a reasonable time. Repeat...

There is very little downtime. Thus, we need to understand the dangers of having overscheduled kids and how to prevent this from happening in our own families.

Benefits of a Simplified Schedule for Kids

Spend More Time With Your Children

Childhood is so fleetingly fast that watching it pass by is simultaneously amazing and heartbreaking. We blink and our children are grown and gone, living their own lives. Simplifying your schedule will free up some precious time that you could spend just playing or talking with your children.

Improve Focus

Cutting down to one or two of your child's favorite activities, as well as simplifying your own work schedule, gives both you and your child more time to focus on the things that are truly important to your family. You can devote more time to these activities, delve deeper into them, and get better at them as a result.

Schedule Free Time & Develop Creativity

Free time is an important building block of creativity. Children need to be bored so they can find ways to overcome boredom on their own. They need to try something and fail, and try again and succeed, on their own, without teachers or hypervigilant parents hovering about. A simpler schedule can give your child the freedom they need to be bored – and grow as a result.

Resources

Articles

[5 Simple Ways to Avoid Overscheduling Your Child](#)

[How to Support and Nurture Your Child's Passions](#)

[Fight the Pressure to Overschedule Your Children](#)

[How Much is Too Much?](#)

[Why You Need to Simplify Your Family Schedule](#)

Books

The Overscheduled Child by Alvin Rosenfeld

The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon by David Elkind

Minimalist Parenting: Enjoy Modern Family Life More by Doing Less by Christine Koh

The Happy Kid Handbook: How to Raise Joyful Children in a Stressful World by Katie Hurley