

Kids Eye View: Over scheduling **By Michael Moorehead**

In today's day and age, many children – and adults for that matter – find themselves overwhelmed with their tightly packed lives.

Occasionally, it *is* enjoyable to have a full day of fun activities, but some folks think it would be nice to have *every* day jammed with their favorite pastimes. However, if kids get used to having overly crammed days it can have a negative impact on them later on in life.

If children's lives are an endless rush from one activity to another, jumping around from place to place like a flaming grasshopper, they will start to lose their attention span. Eventually, they won't be able to concentrate and just do one thing for a long period of time, like watch a movie all the way through to the end without getting bored, read a book for more than a few minutes, listen to a full set of directions or even finish reading this article. Instead, they'll want to hop from thing to thing to thing.

Sometimes people just need to slow down and take a chill pill.

To help kids stay focused, parents should only involve their children in one or two activities at a time. For example, some of my friends are totally overbooked with hobbies like violin lessons, baseball, chess club and Boy Scouting all at once. I've noticed that those kids have shorter attention spans, they're usually tired and whiny, and they always leave things unfinished – sometimes even their lunch. And their parents are run ragged from carting their child around from lessons to practice to club sports. The irony is that neither the kids nor the parents are having much fun because they're too pooped out.

Another consequence to overbooking youths' schedules is that it can cause a drop in their grades. Think about it. If students can't focus or pay attention to a teacher for a long period of time, then how can they get good grades? (By the way, we're talking about average kids here, not geniuses.)

Giving kids a chance to slow down and relax, and know they don't have to go somewhere every few minutes, helps them think more clearly, improves their moods, reduces stress and keeps them healthier. Unplanned time gives children the chance to think freely. It opens up the doors to their imaginations. Who knows, it might even give them the time and motivation to build a dog house, explore a new interest like astronomy or even write a book one day.

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