

IS YOUR CHILD OVERSCHEDULED?

A generation ago, few children had as much organized activity in their lives as they do today. Most days consisted of attending school, playing in the neighborhood, eating dinner with the family and preparing for school the next day. Some children had a piano lesson, baseball practice or a ballet class one afternoon a week, but few encountered today's great variety of programming options.

While extracurricular activities can provide children an opportunity to learn important skills, some families today with the best of intentions, often overdo it. Some kids have not just one extracurricular activity a week, but two a day! Some are involved in a different sport every season and also enrolled in dance class, music lessons, karate instruction, swimming lessons and more.

These activities are now often being offered to children at earlier and earlier ages. It's not uncommon to hear three-year-olds discussing and comparing their busy itineraries.

Too much programming can have detrimental effects. It's stressful to be rushed from one activity to the next. It's tiring to be among a group of other children in an organized program all day long then be taken to yet another structured class. Kids need time to play and relax in whatever ways they want. Also, the reduction of unstructured time with family and close friends is a loss for young children's emotional development.

If you are concerned that you might be over-programming your child's time you might ask yourself questions like: Is this activity good for my child's self-esteem? Is this something she is truly interested in? Is he overly tired?