

Overscheduled + Overstressed + Overstimulated = Disconnected

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“Let’s go!” “Hurry up!” “Where are my shoes?” “Has anyone seen my glove?” These and many other like phrases like them make up the conversations of the typical family in America. Families are in a state of constant motion where it seems the kids of the families always have someplace they are supposed to be. The typical day for kids begins early and ends late. That means the parents’ day does too—along with any member of the family who doesn’t have somewhere else they need to be also. School, sports, entertainment, friends, hobbies, church, youth group activities, and on and on it goes. The life of the American family is busy, yet not much time is actually available for the family.

When did family time lose its priority? Unfortunately, I think it all began when well-meaning parents wanted better for their kids than they had for themselves. We all want to give our kids every possible opportunity. We want to avail to them many prospects so they can choose what they are best at and are the most interested in. I think that part is great. What I hate to see is when we decide that what is best for the child is to allow them so many opportunities they never really get to bond, grow, and make memories with their family with whom they share little more than an address.

Sibling relationships are suffering. Most kids would rather be with friends than spend even an hour with a sibling. That is a scary thought. As parents, we should be nurturing lifelong relationships among our family members. The family is a gift from God and should be a priority in our scheduling. I also believe if we make it a priority to schedule more time for family, our children would be less stressed and the entire family would be more contented. Kids end up not enjoying activities and either feel stress to perform at a certain level or burn out on a sport.

It is so important for every person to learn how to be still—perhaps even bored. Always feeling the pressure to be active or entertained creates in a person the inability to stop and meditate and to enjoy the simple. Human beings need to have times of peace and time to contemplate. Families are destroyed from chaotic schedules and the fact they have no bonds because they never are together to create them. Setting limits and enforcing a consistent family

time will allow our kids to have balance and also improve our family relationships. This will also build within our children the ability to use their imaginations and not have time filled for them.

The busyness that is prevalent in society today seems to cause us to focus on the temporary and the now and lose sight of the truly important matters in life and eternity. When I look back on life, I want to have (and I want my children to have) memories of fun times and experiences that bonded us with our family—not a case full of tarnished trophies at the expense of fractured relationships. I desire relationships with my children that extend beyond that of a glorified chauffeur.

What it all comes down to is commitment and balance. Commitment to keep the family a priority and balance to let kids be involved but not overcommitted. It is important to discuss all the options with your child and decide the pros and cons of each activity along with its requirements. Then discuss how their decision will ultimately affect the entire family as well as their own commitment level over the necessary timeframe. Always put the priority on God and family and you can be assured everything else will fall into place (Matthew 6:19-20).