



NEWS RELEASE

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By Anna Martin
Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences Advisor
UCCE San Joaquin County

Too Much Going On: Tips for Busy Kids and Families

There are many times when we feel our schedules are out of control and we are overburdened. Back to school time, sports or other extra activities, birthdays, and holidays are just a few examples. Such times can be fun and bring much joy, but often they are a major source of stress. Here are a few tips to help make them a little easier and more enjoyable:

Don't start activities too soon. Young children have trouble waiting and want things right away. If you hold off preparation for special activities until the event is near, you will avoid "burnout".

Keep schedules regular. Children find great comfort in routines, especially during stressful times. By keeping your routine constant, you will help children cope more easily.

Take care of basic needs. Getting enough sleep, having some quiet or "down" time, and eating nutritious foods are extremely important. Being rested and healthy helps children and adults to handle stress better, have more energy, reduce illness, and maintain positive attitudes.

Limit TV viewing. Watching too many fast-paced, enticing commercials and programs can cause children to become overly active and lose control. Instead, switch to non-commercial stations, show children's videos, or spend time doing other activities such as reading, baking, crafts, or playing a game.

Don't wait to have fun! Children love special activities all year round. Rather than pack everything into a certain period, save some of those special activities for the rest of the year. Children will be just as excited about making cookies or having a party with friends.

Set realistic expectations for yourself. Doing a few activities you have time for and truly enjoy them is much better than racing through many activities and feeling stressed. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do, what you can and cannot control. First, make a list of all the things you would like to do. Then, decide how important each activity is to you and your family. Weigh the costs and benefits of each. Together, choose three or four of the most important activities. Make time for only those activities. You do not have to do everything and it is all right to say "no" without feeling guilty.

Develop traditions. Develop family activities and rituals that repeat every week, month or year. Traditions help build memories, reinforce values, and strengthen relationships. Make dinner hour a time of sharing and support. Schedule "family nights." Volunteer together with a community project. Nurture family spirituality. Learn to plan and organize activities with that give your family more time together.

Referenced from Patti Wooten Swanson, UCCE San Diego County. Source: Richardson, D. (December 2001). FCS Resource Update, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. <http://fcs.okstate.edu/publications/resource-update/12-01/update.htm>