

NURTURING CHILDREN IN A FAST-PACED WORLD

We live in a very privileged yet demanding community where children have countless options for school-based and extra-curricular activities. This is the good news and the bad news.

Each family must set its own course based on their own values and goals as well as the needs and wants of their children.

Some questions to ask:

Does my child really need/want all this action?

Why are we signing up for this activity?

Am I under pressure from family, the community, a fear of being left behind, social obligations?

Will my child REALLY not get into college if we opt out of soccer at age 3?

NON-NEGOTIABLES: These are activities that a family considers so important that they extend themselves to make sure children participate. These include, but are not limited to: Music lessons, languages, religious education, athletics, tutoring (more on that later)

My non-negotiables might include _____

NEGOTIABLES are things a child or parent might want to do. Having some control over this is important for even young children because making choices helps us define ourselves.

*one negotiable might be Doing Nothing!

*another might be playing!

Some activities my child might choose include

: _____

YOU KNOW YOU'VE NAILED IT WHEN:

- *Your calendar doesn't need add-on pages and tabs
- *Your child does the heavy lifting on organizing gear and being ready for practices and games
- *Your child is sleeping well, has time for homework and reading, is not whining and complaining and is reasonably civil to siblings.

UH-OH!

- *Family dinners take place in the Burger King Drive-thru
- *There is no play time or down time (for you or your child)
- * You need to go to every practice and game because your child behaves badly or does not participate in a given activity
- *Your children are fighting and whining constantly. Bedtime is a disaster.
- *Your child (and you) are sick more than the average person

HOW TO COPE

Step back and really observe your child. When are they engaged and relaxed? What do they honestly get excited about?

Be willing to back out of something if it's not working!! Even if you've paid a king's ransom, why increase the misery?

Take time to develop positive routines, especially around bedtime, and before school. Routines help children feel safe and make it easier for them to focus on important things.

Make sure you have at least a few family rituals such as game and pizza nights, walks in the park, church, etc.

Make sure your child has responsibilities at home. Chores, helping with dinner help a child to feel needed and valued.