

## Tips for the Overscheduled Family

Does this sound like your family...Your children are involved in several activities outside of school. Consequently, you and your spouse are spending a lot of time making sure everyone gets where he or she needs to be. Most days you and your children don't have any time to relax.

These are just some of the signs that your family may be overscheduled. Additionally, children in overscheduled families are more prone to stress, depression and lower self-esteem. Some experts suggest that children need strong family relationships for good development and mental health. Therefore, balance between scheduled activities and family time is important.

### Ways to Lighten the Load:

- Try to limit each child in the family to one or two extracurricular activities.
- If your child wants to add an activity, they may need to consider giving up the current activity in exchange for a new one.
- Find out what activities your child does not enjoy anymore and try to eliminate the activities that your child is less interested in. For instance, if your child spends most of the time on the soccer field picking the grass and using his or her cleats to make circles in the dirt, he or she may not really enjoy playing soccer.
- Help your child learn to say 'no' to additional activities. Assist them with placing appropriate limits on their activities away from home.
- Do not say 'yes' to any new activity for yourself or child until you have weighed the costs (financial, emotional, loss of family time, etc)
- Brainstorm ways to slow down as a family. Do you find yourself, frequently saying, "Hurry up, we are going to be late?" What activities can you or your children give up or decrease in frequency?
- Set priorities for your family. How many hours a week do you want to be together as a family?
- Resolve to eat dinner together as a family at least 3-5 times a week, even if this is a sandwich before you head out to a game or lesson.
- Set family nights on your calendar. Order pizza and play board games. Avoid scheduling anything else on family night.
- Take time to play in creative ways. Schedule "goof-off time" for your family and children. Give your child time to explore a hobby or play outside.
- Take time as a family to enjoy nature and the outdoors away from home. Go to a park for a picnic, enjoy a bike ride, take a hike, etc.

### For More Information:

For a free and confidential mental health screening, go on-line to [www.mhacolorado.org](http://www.mhacolorado.org).