

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET CATEGORY

Constructive Use of Time

Young people are more likely to grow up healthy when they have opportunities to learn new skills and interests.

Youth Speak

- "Let me have time for freedom."
- "Offer lots of fun things to do after school."
- "Notice when I do useful things."
- "Open up more places for young people to go."

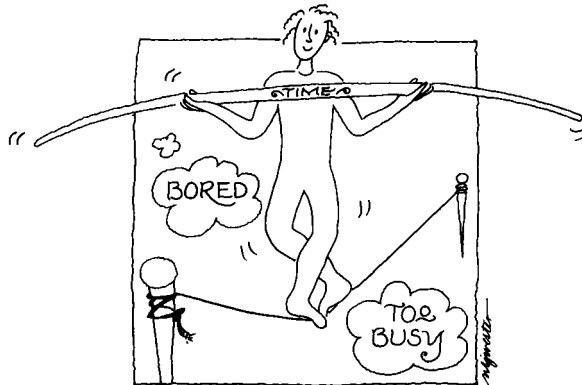
Time: Help Make Your Child's Count

Sometimes kids get bored. Other times, they're so busy we rarely see them. The paces of our children's lives seem to vary according to the activities and programs they're in at the moment.

These fluctuations are normal—even healthy. As long as our kids aren't stuck in having too much to do or not enough to do, they're on track.

It never hurts, however, to periodically take an "activity" inventory. Ask your child questions such as these:

- Overall, are you happy with how many different things you do with your time? Why or why not?
- Are the activities you're in stimulating and challenging?



- Are you making friends with caring, thoughtful adults in your activities?
- Are you learning new skills, talents, or knowledge?
- Do your activities teach you more about yourself?
- Are you excited most days to do these activities?

- Do these activities bring out the best in you?

The more times your child answers yes, the better. If your child seems to have too few constructive, challenging things to do, consider helping her or him find other constructive activities using the criteria in the questions above.

More to come on the four constructive-use-of-time assets!

4 Key Areas of Involvement

Search Institute researchers have identified four assets in the area of constructive use of time that are crucial for helping young people grow up healthy. Check your child's areas of strength:

- Creative activities—Your child spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- Youth programs—Your child spends three

or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.

- Religious community—Your child spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
- Time at home—Your child is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Time Use through the Years

Age Ways to Make the Most of Your Child's Time

- 0-1
 - Have your baby spend most of the time with you or one or two consistent caregivers.
 - Give your baby a change of scene now and then. Move the rocking chair to a different room or take a walk outside.
- 2-3
 - Have consistent times for sleeping, feeding, playing, and relaxing.
 - Spend time outdoors every day.
- 4-5
 - Find simple household chores that you and your child can do together.
 - Visit interesting buildings together. Tour a barn, skyscraper, fire station, or bakery.
- 6-10
 - Allow your child to have two outside-the-home activities that are led by caring, nurturing adults.
 - Let your child experiment with different activities he or she likes.
- 11-15
 - Help your young adolescent set boundaries on structured activities. Look for ones that are positive, stimulating, have caring adults, and don't require excessive time commitments.
 - Evaluate with your young adolescent the amount of time he or she spends "hanging out." Is it balanced with time at home, time in activities, and time at school?
- 16-18
 - Help your teenager think about how time spent on different activities helps or hinders in reaching goals.
 - Encourage your teenager to be involved in at least one activity that may continue into her or his adult years.

What about Work?

Teenagers learn from their work experience—responsibility, time management, and getting along with others are just some of the lessons having a job can teach. However, if possible, young people should work no more than 10 or 15 hours a week. Anything over that can make it hard to meet other obligations and get enough rest.

Quick Tip:
Kids learn values and skills while doing worthwhile activities.

More Help for Parents

Developing Competent Youth and Strong Communities through After-School Programming by Thomas Gullotta, editor. This book describes the positive effects of various after-school programs. (Published by Child Welfare League of America.)

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**"We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right."
—Martin Luther King Jr.**

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