



USE OF TIME

“The more time a child spends with caring adults, who nurture the child’s skills and creativity, the more likely it is that he or she will grow up healthy.”

Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., What Kids Need to Succeed

*You may have opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular and community activities. While it’s important not to let too many outside activities conflict with family life, studies have shown positive benefits for youth who are involved in pursuits such as music lessons, after-school clubs, athletic teams, community organizations, etc. These activities can help youth develop talents and skills, make friends, interact with caring adults, and avoid situations which would lead to problem behaviors. This newsletter looks at ways that parents and other adults can encourage constructive use of time as they work together to **help youth succeed.***



Most youth have a natural interest in creative activities such as music, drama, literature or art. Help them develop their talents through structured, creative activities.

✓ PARENTS: Whenever possible, provide youth with the opportunity to develop musical skills through lessons

and practice. Encourage participation in drama or other creative classes. Show support for your youth by attending their performances. Watch for community plays and events that are free of charge, and take the whole family!

✓ SCHOOLS: Support music and arts programs in the school. Encourage teachers to integrate music into their lessons whenever possible. Host a school talent show.

✓ CONGREGATIONS: Organize a youth choir, or encourage the youth to participate in the adult choir. Assign youth to organize a variety show, musical, or play. Ask congregation members to share their talents and skills with youth, either in a class setting or one-to-one. Have these adults describe ways in which the arts have enriched their lives.



Being involved in after-school, or extracurricular activities gives students opportunities to learn unique skills, and it gives them a chance to associate with other youth and caring adults who share their interests.



✓ PARENTS: Encourage your youth to participate in extracurricular activities and be available to help if needed. Volunteer to help with after-school clubs, or offer to provide transportation or other support.

✓ SCHOOLS: Provide ongoing information to students about clubs and after-school activities sponsored by the school. Encourage and support teachers who serve as advisors for extracurricular activities. Include information about the school and the community’s youth programs in parent newsletters and other school publications.

✓ CONGREGATIONS: Support clubs that your community offers by announcing their activities in your congregation. Youth leaders should be aware of the extracurricular activities of their youth, and support youth by attending games, concerts, or other events and programs.

✓ COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS: Make effective use of the media to publicize all youth programs that the community has to offer -- include information in newspapers, radio advertising, community mailings, school posters, library bulletin boards, etc. Be aware of the financial constraints of many families, and find ways to provide opportunities for all children to participate in community-sponsored youth programs.



Congregations offer youth religious instruction and support and can help youth and their families build a strong value base. Recent research has shown that youth who are involved in weekly religious activities are better able to avoid negative peer pressure and less likely to participate in “risky” behavior such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, etc.



✓ PARENTS: If you are not currently participating in a religious organization, involve your youth in the decision-making process about which church or group you would like to attend. Find a congregation that emphasizes your own family’s values and promotes behaviors that you would like to see in your youth. Attend worship services with your youth, and support the congregation’s youth program.

✓ SCHOOLS: Avoid scheduling school activities which may conflict with religious services, holidays or other activities. If possible, discuss various religious holidays and traditions as those days occur each year - remember to consider all of the varying faiths which may be represented within your school. (Check the school’s policy to make sure this type of discussion is permitted in your school.)

✓ CONGREGATIONS: Consider the youth in your congregation as you prepare Sunday sermons or other lessons: make sure that there are messages that youth can readily identify with. Support a strong youth group in your congregation and recruit dedicated, caring adults to serve in this area.



While it’s important that youth have free time, or evenings when they can just “hang out” with friends, too much unscheduled time (research suggests more than two nights a week) can lead to boredom, which leads to at-risk behaviors. Parents need to make sure that there is plenty of family time scheduled along with outside activities for their youth.



✓ PARENTS: Set aside one evening each week for family time, and have family members take turns planning games or activities for the family time. Encourage your youth to invite friends over to your home for activities, games or just to do homework. Make your home a comfortable place for your youth and their friends.

✓ SCHOOLS: Don’t over-schedule students’ time -- limit the number of weekly or monthly school-sponsored activities. Teach youth advisors and coaches how to help youth in setting priorities and managing their time.



✓ CONGREGATIONS: Encourage and support parents in scheduling family time each week. Offer suggestions and ideas for family activities in the congregational newsletter. Evaluate the number of activities scheduled for youth in the congregation -- make sure that church activities aren’t “over-riding” the time which should be spent in the home or with family.



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Parents' To-Do List

1. Plan an activity for my youth and his friends.
2. Ask my kids if they are interested in guitar (or other) lessons.
3. Attend a concert or play together as a family.
4. Be a “talent scout” this month, and find all the things my youth is good at - visit with her about these talents and together, find ways to improve them.
5. Make time for fun!

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