

## 7 Signs Your Teen Is Overscheduled

(by Amy Morin, LCSW, from [verywellfamily.com](http://verywellfamily.com))

On one end of the spectrum, some teens have way too little to do. In fact, a 2008 study presented by the American Heart Association found that 60% of teenagers spent an average of 20 hours per week in front of the TV and the computer. The study also showed that a small minority of teens, 7% of them, enjoy a whopping 50 [hours of screen time](#) every week.

But on the other end of the spectrum, you'll find teens who are really busy. They're taking extra classes at school, [working part-time jobs](#), playing sports, and maintaining hectic after-school schedules with little to no extra time.

While it may look good on your teen's transcripts to say they're the captain of the [soccer](#) team and head of the student council, for some teens, a busy schedule can be problematic. The lack of free time may eventually take a serious toll on their physical and emotional health.

It's important to find just the right balance for your teen. You want them to be busy enough that they don't have time to get [mixed up with the wrong crowd](#), yet you want to make sure they're not so bored that they start looking for trouble. But it's also important to make sure they aren't burning themselves out as they run around from one activity to the next.

In the best-case scenario, a teen has overscheduled themselves because they truly love the activities in which they're involved—but even that situation doesn't mean that it's always a healthy decision. Keep an eye out for one of these seven signs that a teen is overscheduled and be prepared to intervene, if necessary.

### 1. Your Teen Never Has Any Downtime

While you don't want your teen to be too idle, a little downtime is really good for them. Having some free time can help them to explore a new hobby or find an exciting topic to research. Or, it could just give them time to relax and think.

Adolescence is when young people learn about who they are as individuals and it's important to think about the future. After all, the teen years are a time when many dreams are born. Everyone needs moments of quiet and relaxation.

So ask yourself, when was the last time you saw your teen doing nothing? In other words, when did they last enjoy an activity that wasn't mandated by someone else?

If all you can envision is your teen heading off to play rehearsal, practicing hoops for the big game this week, or studying French for hours, they might be doing too much.

## **2. Grades Have Declined**

If your A-average student is now bringing home Bs and Cs, something's clearly amiss. The numbers don't lie, and when a teen who used to maintain a 90 average on tests and papers has dropped to 80s, 70s or worse, it's time to take a good hard look at their priorities.

Although your teen might protest, school work should come first. After all, if he can't graduate from high school, their athletic abilities or musical talents will likely only take them so far.

So make sure your teen has plenty of time to do homework, study for tests, and be prepared for school before you allow them to continue with other extra-curricular activities.

### [How to Help When Your Teen Falls Behind in School](#)

## **3. Not Getting Enough Sleep**

If your teen is so busy they don't have time to get everything done during the day, their sleep may be the first thing to suffer. It's recommended that teens get at least nine hours of sleep per night. But a 2010 study reported that only 7.6 percent of kids were getting enough shut-eye. And sleep deprivation can have serious consequences.

Unfortunately, many teens may fall into the trap of thinking they'll get more done if they stay up late. But a lack of sleep can often impede productivity

the following day. The less efficient they are at getting their work done, the longer it will take to get their assignments completed.

If your teen doesn't have time to get enough sleep, something has to give. A lack of sleep could lead to serious [mental health problems](#) or physical health issues.

#### **4. Health Is Suffering**

Being too busy can affect your teen's health in several ways. If your teen is overscheduled, they may not have time to properly take care of themselves with regular exercise and eating a healthy diet. And over time, that can take a serious toll on their well-being.

The stress of having too much to do, and too little time to do it, can also take a toll on your teen's physical and mental health. Research has linked chronic stress to a variety of health problems, ranging from decreased immunity to the common cold to increased risk of cardiovascular and autoimmune disorders.

Teens who feel a lot of pressure to get into good colleges may feel forced to fill their days with activities like tutoring and violin lessons. But studies show the chronic stress many teens experience to be overachievers increases their risk of mental health problems, like depression and anxiety.

#### **5. Doesn't Have Time for Friends**

Between band practice, sports, play rehearsal, and a part-time job, an overscheduled teen simply doesn't have time for friends. And spending time with friends is crucial to your teen's social development.

And while you might think seeing their friends at school might be enough, there's a good chance structured activities don't leave much time for socializing.

Your teen needs an opportunity to be away from all the rules that come with structured activities. Spending time with friends away from adults is key to helping your teen learn how to resolve conflict, communicate with others, and [solve problems](#).

## **6. Days Are Filled With All Work and No Fun**

If your teen used to love playing the piano, yet they now procrastinate on practicing, they might be overscheduled. A too-busy teen might start saying no to even the most fun of activities, such as sleepovers, movies with friends and joining the family for their favorite dinner.

It's less concerning if your teenager just isn't in one activity anymore—they might have just outgrown it. But if nothing seems to bring them joy anymore, then it's time to take measures. They may be stressed out, burned out, or even depressed.

## **7. You're Tired, Too**

It's exhausting to attend weekly sports games, band concerts, and other teen activities. And if you're the one chauffeuring your teen around, you're likely to spend a lot of time waiting for them. If you're tired of all of the activities that your teen is doing, then there's a good chance that they feel overwhelmed, too.

It's important to be a good role model for your teen. Sometimes, that means slowing down and practicing some self-care.

Be willing to take a Saturday afternoon to relax. Or, give yourself permission to go on a weekend getaway. Show your teen that you don't always have to be busy and productive all the time.

### **How to Help an Overscheduled Teen**

If you think your teen is too busy, it's important to take action. The first step is to sit your teen down to see how they feel. There could be the occasional instance where where your teen simply loves all the activities!

In other cases, they might protest at letting go of an activity or two, but slowing could be necessary for their well-being. Make the executive decision to take them out of an activity of their choosing—as long as it's not homework or studying, of course. They can always pick it back up in the future if they find that they've been missing out.

Keep in mind that the teen years are a vital time for your child to learn [how to manage their time](#). If they're struggling to find time to do everything, they're going to need you to intervene and help them say no to certain activities.

Make sure you aren't putting [too much pressure on your child](#) to perform. Getting them into an Ivy League school isn't worth it if they're so burned out that they can barely function by the time they get there.

If your teen is really struggling to cope with the demands of adolescent life, seek professional help. Whether they're a perfectionist, a procrastinator, or an overachiever, a mental health professional can assist them in developing healthier habits.

Finally, keep in mind that some teens—as well as many adults—view being busy as a status symbol. Make sure your teen knows that their self-worth shouldn't depend on how busy their social and academic schedules are.