Is Over-Scheduling Dysregulating Your Child’s Nervous System? Transcript

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Why Overscheduling Overwhelms Kids

What if the activities you thought were helping your kid were actually overwhelming their brain? Today, I'm here breaking down the hidden ways over scheduling affects your kids mood, focus, behavior, and emotional stability.

even if their activities they love. Today, it's hard in modern parenting. We're raising kids in a culture of being busy, as seen as being successful. And the pressure sounds like this.

They'll fall behind if they don't do enough. Kids need to be busy. Kids needs to well-rounded. Everybody else is doing it. Oh, they won't get into a good college if they don't participate in X, Y, and Z.

When you're a parent, especially a caring one, you think, I want my kid to have every chance I never had. But here's the hidden cost. Kids don't need more opportunities.

They need a more regulated nervous system. And for those of us that grew up in the 70s, 80s and 90s we didn't have constant stimulation. This is a fact of our life and this is definitely things we're dealing with, but there is magic in doing nothing.

Italians do it really well. They still take naps not in the major cities and in Spain too. Every transition, no matter how small, requires some neurological energy.

Nervous System Overload and Lack of Downtime

When kids go from school to activity to homework, to another activity, to bedtime and repeat. The body never gets a chance to go to that parasympathetic, relaxed nervous system baseline.

Maybe they never had it. What does this mean when they never get downtime? Well, our stress hormone cortisol stays elevated. Our sensory systems stay activated, which means we could be under over responsive to sensory stimulation, including sound, listening, touch.

taste, all these things stay activated. The prefrontal cortex stays overloaded. It's like a brain on fire whenever I see them on the brain map. You can see the overactivity literally on a map of somebody whose pre-front cortex can't relax.

And again, we think staying activated is a good thing. Stress accumulates within the body when we don't release it. And regulation becomes harder. When your nervous system doesn't know how to regulate itself, moods become more unpredictable because that nervous is just experiencing the world around it way too much.

It doesn t have an ability to go off. And even fun activities can be overstimulating when the nervous system is already running high. And I think we see this a lot with our neurodivergent kids.

I know many times parents will say to me like, oh, we can't even go to a birthday party or do anything fun because they're so reactive to it. Well, it's because their nervous systems jacked up.

Okay. What does it look like when your kid is falling apart?

Signs Your Child Is Maxed Out

Because home is the only place where the You're going to see a lot more tears, irritability, saying I don't know, meltdowns over socks, resistance to simple tasks, refusal to go to school or activities, difficulty sleeping, complaining about physical pain like headaches and stomach aches.

when you are home because that's your safe place. People often think, well, they're just doing this on purpose or they are being bratty. That's just not the case.

Their brain and body are overloaded and it's that safe space that it lets it out. So Erin told me he's great at practice, he is great in school, but at home, it is like a hot mess and he explodes.

Her sons Coach once said, he's fantastic. I never have a problem with him. He went from soccer to robotics to this and then at home he was yelling. They kept thinking, He's got such a good life.

Why is he so unhappy? I don't understand. happiness or unhappiness, it's a matter of being over scheduled because his nervous system literally didn't have downtime, recovery time to reset itself.

And he could hold it together everywhere until he walked through that front door. What we decided was going to be helpful for Erin and her son was what was one activity I've done this so many times with parents.

Like, what's the one activity you could get rid of? It's like, wow, he's supposed to do this and he supposed do that. But he needed to get read of something.

So they remove something and his meltdowns really dropped. quite considerably, pretty quick. And she was very, very careful not to put anything else in there.

Oh, well, you know, oh, he should have a play date. She actually just felt like he needed relax time. I don't know how, remember there was a mom at the last school and the kid definitely had stuff and neurodivergent and not that my kid didn't have stuff.

He just went from one sports activity to another. What is going on?" And she said it was beneficial for him. I know it wasn't, but in our house, like, God, we all need downtime.

So I can go and I remember my friend Cynthia's husband's like you're like a rock star. Like you could be up at 6 a.m., out to 4 a. And I'm like yeah, But I don't do that every day.

How to Reduce Activities and Build Recovery Time

Even when things are exciting, you can't live like that. have to have some downtime. And otherwise, some of these things are going to happen. This isn't magic, it's just a regulated brain.

We think kids need productivity, they need to be busy all the time. But what they actually need is predictability. They can't just live in stimulation, even if they seem like they want it.

The need rest. Then we have think about activities that build regulation and resilience. How can you build that into your So how do we know when over scheduling is a problem?

These are the clues. Mood shifts after activities, you're seeing crying, irritability shut down before or after too, and they're running too hot. They have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

because a revved up nervous system does not settle easily. We've all experienced this resistance to getting ready or leaving the house. It's a sign of transition overload, good at school, falling apart at home, classic sign, of cumulative stress.

I mean, can I say that again? When kids fall apart, at-home and are phenomenal at, school it's, a classic, sign. Of nervous, system overload also constant complaints of, You know, that what we call those somatic complaints, stomach aches, headaches, stress often shows up in physical symptoms with kids.

I mean, I think it shows like that for us, but with the kids, it's very much that way. And one of these symptoms might be fine, But together, you got yourself a problem.

The child is telling you they're maxed out. You can say, oh, but he likes this, and I wanted her to be with her friends. You got to think about recovery routines, 10, 20 minutes a day.

What's quiet movement, sensory regulation after school, activity a day per week. And that's where the nervous system is going to reset. You're going reduce transitions whenever possible.

I mean, kids have to learn how to go with the flow. How can you streamline things, not just for your kids, but for yourself? Because this is the world we live in and we need to reduce our stress.

Let the child's behavior, not the calendar, decide what activity is going to stay with them. Because if something is consistently, then you have a problem, you've got to address it.

And then let boredom happen, because boredome leads to creativity. Boredom leads self-regulation, and kids can't heal in chaos.

Boredom, Regulation, and Final Takeaways

They need quietness. Because to me, that means they don't know how to self-regulate. And we don' have to fill that time. I mean, is it nice to do calming activities together?

Yes, but we live in a world where we're doing a lot of things. So if your child is irritable, melting down, emotionally fragile, just really reactive and pushing buttons, Don't think that you've done something wrong or they've did something.

Think of it as their nervous system asking for space to breathe. You're not depriving them by doing less. The world won't. A regulated childhood. I like to think of it again as our 70s, 80s and 90s childhood where every single thing we were doing wasn't captured on a CCTV.

Thank God. Just being taken pictures of. Today, parents are actually seeing their kids through the lens of a camera and recording everything. Who's going back and looking at all that stuff?

So kids need regulation time. We need Regulation Time. Build it in. Brace boredom. And if you're looking for more support, take our Solution Matcher. It's just going to be three minutes to a personalized response.

Then you go to drrosanne.com forward slash help. I hope this inspired you to take away an activity that might be putting you and your kid over the edge.

Want more insights and solutions? Well, subscribe to our dysregulation insider and it will show up in your inbox every week.