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Positive Parenting
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SCHEDULES

It's fall, at least for those of us who live on an academic calendar! Many of the very same parents, who three months ago were yearning for the wide open expanses of summer time with much less structure, are now looking forward to the structure of fall schedules.

This seems like an opportune time to reflect on WHAT we schedule and HOW we schedule this precious God-given gift of our lives together. This is not a disquisition on how to multi-task, how to fit more in. It is a moment to be intentional, deliberate, and mindful about how we use this gift of time.

A life in balance features time to tend seven areas of wellness:

SPIRITUAL is anchored in understanding that all of life is holy ground, lived in the presence of God. It is practiced using the Four Keys for Nurturing Faith: caring conversations, devotions, rituals and traditions, and service.

INTELLECTUAL certainly includes school and school work, but it expands to make time for creativity, inquisitive exploration, and daydreaming. It is all about passionate lifelong learning, which adults need to pursue and model for children, especially those for whom school is not a joyous experience.

EMOTIONAL is all about having the time and opportunity to reflect on what we are feeling and to share that with those we trust. It also means handling those harder emotions: stress, sorrow, hurt, anger, and shame.

RELATIONAL needs time to tend relationships, time for listening, wondering, getting to really know one another and to allow others to really know us. Quality time together usually happens in the context of quantity time.

ENVIRONMENTAL means that all of us need time to connect with God's creation, enjoying it and tending it. (Recent research expresses concern about what one writer labels "nature deficit disorder.") This area of wellness also creates order and pleasing places to live, study, work, and play.

VOCATIONAL wellness explores what God has created us to be and to do and to contribute uniquely to God's world. With children, begin by "catching" them having natural gifts, abilities, and passions. Name what you see. Do it for yourself, too!

PHYSICAL wellness includes adequate sleep, nutritious food, and physical exercise. This is the place many of us sacrifice on the altar of getting more done in a day. More is

not necessarily better. Remember that God gave you that wonderful body to use, to care for, to savor.

So, as you begin your fall schedules, look to make sure it is a life in balance. If not from you, where will your child learn this vital skill?

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. As a family, discuss your values. Check that your calendar reflects those values. Make changes, if it doesn't.
2. Challenge each and every thing on the calendar. Is it life giving? Does it reflect your family's values? Learn to say "no" or to change your commitments when they are inconsistent with what you believe and value.
3. Build in family time each and every day. Remember the Four Keys for Nurturing Faith. Each of those building blocks for faith formation happen during time together.
4. As a family, schedule weekly time together to play, to learn, to serve, to just be present with one another on your calendar. Guard it as sacred ...because it is!
5. Rotate who plans time together. Let each person plan a time and what the family will do. For the littlest ones, talk with the rest of the family, and plan something that you know the little one would enjoy. Agree to be open and supportive and uncomplaining, no matter what the plans.
6. Have a master family calendar that includes all of the events, commitments, lessons, sports, learning experiences, leisure time, and worship on it. As a family, consult the calendar regularly, before committing to something new. Calendar surprises are usually NOT a good and happy thing!