

## AoW #3 **Overscheduled Kids:** How much of a good thing is too much?

By [Marilyn Wedge Ph.D.](#) Posted Aug 16, 2014 on *Psychology Today* website

Yesterday, a mother and daughter were in my office because they hadn't been getting along lately. The daughter, a willowy twelve-year-old named Alisha, said she was stressed out because she had too much to do now that school had started. As she listed her daily obligations I saw what she meant. Her after school schedule looked like this: two hours of homework, forty-five minutes of practicing piano, swim [team](#) practice three days a week, and half an hour each day of homework for [religious](#) school which she attended on weekends. It did seem like a lot to me. But my job was to remain neutral and listen to both points of view.

Alisha's mother, who worked full time as a software engineer, did not think that her daughter's work load was excessive. She wanted Alisha to learn to manage her time more efficiently. [Time management](#) was the key, she believed. Alisha, for her part, complained that she had no free time to "chill." She wanted time to text her friends and play a video game now and then. She didn't want to take piano lessons anymore because she didn't enjoy practicing. Her mother thought Alisha should continue because she had been playing piano for six years. Sticking to piano for a few more years would look good on Alisha's college applications.

"How much enrichment is too much?" I couldn't help wondering during this session. I had no doubt that Alisha's mother was looking out for her daughter's best interests as she saw them. But was all this scheduled time good for Alisha since she said she was stressed out at the thought of it, even before the school year had kicked in.

[Parenting](#) experts are of two minds about overscheduling kids. In back-to-school season about a year ago, Bruce Feiler wrote an article in the New York Times called "Overscheduled Children: How big a problem?"\_ in which he presents a balanced point of view about overscheduling. After the publication of books like *The Over-Scheduled Child*, *The Pressured Child*, *Pressured Parents*, [Stressed-Out Kids](#) a few years ago, there was a flurry of backlash. Articles like "The Over Scheduled Child Myth," appeared, arguing that overscheduling children does not cause them any harm.

Clinical psychologist Polly Young-Eisendrath, author of "The [Self-Esteem](#) Trap," argues that too many activities may be a problem. She blames parents who are too interested in the lives of their children and put them in activities mainly to compete with other parents. She argues that "before age 11 or 12, when children begin to develop self-consciousness, activities risk distracting children from their natural development." Young-Eisendrath argues that kids need time to lie around, play more freely, and have non-goal oriented activities with their parents.

Alvin Rosenfeld, author of *The Overscheduled Child*, says that there's nothing wrong with enrichment activities as long as parents make sure children have enough down time with no activities.

Suniya Luthar, a psychology professor at Columbia, has done extensive studies on the role of extracurricular activities in children's lives. She says "It's good for kids to be scheduled." "It's good for them to have musical activities, [sports](#) or other things organized and supervised by an adult." Outside activities make a child well-rounded. The problem comes, when parents overscrutinize their children's performance in the activities, and they no longer become fun for the kid.

So how much scheduling is too much for any particular kid? Michael Thompson, a clinical psychologist and author of *The Pressured Child*, brings up an especially good point: Is the [motivation](#) for the activity coming from the parent or from the child?

In Alisha's case, the piano lessons seemed more for the mother than for the kid. Alisha explained that she didn't want to give up swim team or religious school, but she had lost her motivation for piano. She wanted to pursue

new interests this year, like possibly run for office in student government. And she wouldn't have time for that if she continued piano.

Eventually, Alisha's mother came around to see her daughter's point of view. She realized that she had wanted to take piano lessons when she was a child, but her parents couldn't afford them. And Alisha could always take up piano again if she wanted to. At the end of the session, her mother accepted her decision and Alisha breathed a sigh of relief.

## Written Response

Use Graff/Birkenstein's They Say / I Say template to identify, pull apart, and respond to **one of the arguments above**. Your response should be at least 250 words.

1. Clever title properly capitalized.
2. Uses They Say / I Say template to fully develop both the author's and the writer's arguments.
3. Accurately identifies a central claim of the article.
4. Appropriately leads into, blends, **parenthetically cites**, and discusses **at least** one quote or key fact / statistic from the article.
5. Explain each quote and discuss your reaction to it (agree or disagree).
6. Concluding sentences.
7. 250+ words, NEAT, LEGIBLE, NO DISTRACTING ERRORS

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

The idea brought up by author X in her/his work, \_\_\_\_\_, is that \_\_\_\_\_. She/he writes, "\_\_\_\_\_." In this passage, X is laying out the problem of \_\_\_\_\_.

When talking about this topic, I side with the belief that \_\_\_\_\_. I feel this way because \_\_\_\_\_. In the text of the article, it states "\_\_\_\_\_." I agree/disagree with this because \_\_\_\_\_. I also have experiences in my life that show \_\_\_\_\_. For example, \_\_\_\_\_. This seems to be/ seems not to be demonstrated in *The Glass Castle*, when \_\_\_\_\_. (make sure you explain). Overall, when reading the article \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_, I agree with the argument presented that \_\_\_\_\_.

## Self-Editing Checklist

I've read through my response, stopping and correcting anything that sounds wordy, awkward, or redundant.	
I have led into and smoothly blended at least one quotation from the article.	
I've properly cited the quotation using parenthetical citation.	
I've capitalized and properly formatted the article title: Ex: "Miss America and Social Media's Ignorant Bigotry" by Leonard Pitts	
I have used logical, appropriate transitions in my response.	
My paragraph ends with a logical concluding sentence which sums things up.	
My response is at least 250+ words long. I've written my word count at the bottom of the paragraph or as a comment on the Doc.	
It may sound simple, but I've made sure to capitalize the first word in each sentence.	
Each sentence has a complete thought. NO SENTENCE FRAGMENTS.	
Sentences are separated by appropriate punctuation. NO RUN-ONS.	