

Whats the Hurry? Slow Down for Childhood!

Introduction

The early years are such a wonderful and unique time in our life; birth to the age of 8 is known internationally as the early childhood years. A precious moment in the time of our life – and it really is almost a moment. You could almost blink and it's gone!

In the 21st Century across many facets of society the concept of childhood has often become blurred and misconstrued. The world is seems to be constantly in hurry and many have lost sight of childhood as a distinct period in the lifespan and that lifestyle is placing unrealistic expectations on children. These aspects of modern living are beyond children's maturity and their ability to deal life, which results in unprecedented pressure, and stress on children. This is often referred to a "push down" effect – where children are exposed to inappropriate experiences younger and younger.

Examples of a "Push Down" Environment for Children

- Preschool teachers being under more and more pressure to formally teach children to read and write! I speak to parents across the country explaining the importance of the pre-school year and play based curriculum.
- Children dressed as teenagers; modeling exposure of media
- The resurgence of beauty pageants! Botoxing children as young as 5 and 7 for beauty pageants
- Expectations of children to be "perfectly behaved"
- Expectations of children to be literate and numerate at age 3 or 4 years – anecdote of reciting alphabet by preschool boy.
- Over labeling of some children
- Children will have done it all by the time they are 10 years! And then what will entertain them?
- Children watching TV shows that are for more mature audiences
- Children playing electronic games and DVD's that are designed for more mature audiences
- Facebook and other social networking
- Children with TV's and computers in their bedrooms

Over Scheduled and Over Entertained Children

- Children being engaged in organized sports and other activities – too many and often activities that are inappropriate for their age.
- Children predominantly being involved in adult driven activities
- Primary school children in to many adult driven activities
- Children having an expectation that they need to be “entertained” every waking minute.
- Limited down time, not time to self initiate, role play, imagination, creativity (If they do have down time they are too exhausted from all their activities)

What Do Children Need?

- Time – to be a child, just to be, to hang about in the back yard or park
- Calm
- Activity
- Rest
- Play
- To self initiate
- Communicate
- Build resilience
- Assertive; learn to be assertive rather than passive or aggressive
- Expressive of needs and feelings