

THE HURRIED CHILD – Part 1 - Causes

by Brian Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

Child stress and depression is at an all-time high. What happened to childhood, that time of life where innocence and innovative play characterized daily life? What happened to that era when parents had a life and a relationship with each other at the same time as raising children? What happened to children having one set of parents for their entire life? What happened to children having parents who were not continuously stressed out and, instead, were able to give their children time and positive memories? What happened to that time when an hotelier, a restaurateur, a taxi driver and an entertainer were all separate occupations outside of the home? What happened to that time when the 'American Dream' included raising a family that would be a delight to you and an asset to society?

What we have allowed ourselves to do is to indulge our children to excess so that our lives are completely tied up in keeping our children busy. Sometimes we feel guilty if they are not doing what their friend's parents are doing for their kids. Other times we want to live out our lives through our children by trying to get them become great at the things we always wanted to do, but couldn't or wouldn't. Yet again, we feel pressured by society's expectations and feel that we are not a good parent if we do not have our kids active in football, soccer, gymnastics, dance, music lessons, swimming, softball, volleyball, basketball or cheerleading.

All of this is a croc. When we start to feel guilty or feel that we are not a good parent if we are not doing these things, then something is basically wrong. We need to evaluate what we are doing and why we are doing it. I am not advocating that children don't do one or more of these activities, but everything must be put into perspective. Running around like a chicken without a head is plain foolishness. You get stressed. Your children get stressed, and the outcome is often negative. You clutter their lives so that they don't get the time to be just children, to be inventive, to relax, to read, to contemplate, to fantasize, or to simply play. You end up doing the chores because you feel sorry that your children are so tired from their busy lives!

What about you? What about your personal life? You get stressed out by rushing your children to and fro. It's hurry, hurry, hurry! The wife rushes one direction with one or more children while the husband goes in a different direction with another child. You sometimes long for the day when all this will stop and your children have moved on to college or out on their own. The problem is that while you were being the taxi driver, the chef, the hotelkeeper and the entertainer you didn't have enough time to build the relationship with your spouse.

The morning after your last child has left home you wake up, go to breakfast and stare across the table at a stranger. There is almost no relationship left, and this becomes a very scary time for couples. So much divorce happens at this stage and many an individual will tell you that there hadn't been a relationship for years. They were only staying together for the sake of the children.

Today I have addressed some of the causes of the hurried life of the child in today's society. In Part 2, I will offer solutions.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.