

Parental expectation and Hurried Child Syndrome

Abstract

A current problem is rapidly growing in the present life style. Driven by their own ego parents over expect from their children and over burden them to make super kids. Fun and enjoyment or rather natural childhood pleasure has no place in their life. To ask excellent academic and cultural excellence from them have caused aggression, irritation, obesity and so many other diseases in them. While they need full love, understanding, rules free life, natural growth of mind and body, otherwise we would create a society of misbalanced, disturbed, aggressive people. Natural laugh, enjoyment and originality would be a thing of past. Every child should be given proper care, proper freedom and natural interaction with others according to his taste.

Keywords: Syndrome - a combination of medical symptoms of any ailment (a type of negative behavior or mental state), Pediatrician – a doctor who is specialist in child diseases., Unrealistic demands- imaginary demands or unfounded demands., Teen- adolescents., Stress-mental pressure., Super kids-extraordinary kids., Over estimating- to expect more than their capability., Defiant- rigid

Introduction

We live in a time-oriented and time-regulated society, where the emphasis is on speed, instant results, fast foods and services. It takes great strength and discipline to try and lead a slower pace of life, so most people flow with the fast current, this fast current is growing rapidly faster. The hurried-child-syndrome, connected to the hurried-life-syndrome that was once a minor ailment two decades ago, has now become an epidemic. The concept of the **hurried child** was first proposed by child psychologist **David Elkind** in his now-classic 1981 book **The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast**. In his book Elkind identifies three main dynamics of hurrying parents, schools and the media.

Hurried child syndrome is a condition in which parents over-schedule their children's lives, push them hard for academic success, and expect them to behave and react as miniature adults'

Dr Rajeshri Singhania, pediatrician of Singhania Children's Clinic in Dubai Healthcare City says that many parents have the feeling that giving their child a good education means pushing them into a large number of activities. Modern children are often bombarded with information, but they need time not only to learn new information, but also to download and process it. Their lives are fully scheduled and their parents place unrealistic demands on them to do well in school and in extracurricular activities. Psychologists point to disturbing trends such as the tripling of the U.S. teen suicide rate since 1980, kids in elementary school suffering from stomach problems and depression, and the alarming number of children diagnosed with attention deficit disorder in recent years.

Clinical and forensic psychologist **Dr Raymond Hamden**, of the Human Relations Institute in Knowledge Village says that the main source of stress for kids who feel hurried comes from their parents. In many instances, the problem lies not in the number of activities in which a child is engaged but the parent's attitude towards their child's involvement. A lot of parents who try to fulfill a dream they never accomplished through their children. Sometimes, for competitive reasons, they want their children to excel, not so much for the kid's sake but for their own social and cultural expectations, or to show off how well or how much their child is doing.

These parents are driven by their own ego more than the desire to do what's best for their offspring, try to transform their children into 'super kids' by rushing them from one enrichment class to another, often at very young ages. One Abu Dhabi primary school teacher tells, 'I have kids in my class who are falling asleep at their desks – they go straight from school to practices or lessons every day. It seems like every minute of their lives is dictated for them, and they don't seem to be enjoying it.' Hurrying

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children has become a widespread trend all across the United States. Elkind states, "Americans expose their children to overwhelming pressures, pressures that can lead to low self esteem, to teenage pregnancy and even to teenage suicide." **Dr. Gail Gross** found that psychiatric units are filled today with a new breed of troubled youngster. Pediatricians are finding more children with stress-related diseases such as ulcers by the age of 7, as well as sleep disorders and bedwetting.

A child who has no time to himself, who is engaged in more activities than he can handle, or who is always rushing from one class or playdate to another may be suffering. **Dr. Singhania** reminds us that while activities like art, music, or sports are meant to be fun, they are also learning experiences during which children must strive to perform correctly or compete – which is not the same as simply playing for the sake of having fun alone.

Elkind's research suggests that student's activities and relationships with their parents are a greater indicator of academic success than hurrying children through early childhood by overestimating their competence and overexposing them to academic experience. Additionally, Elkind discusses the concept that children who are not ready early are placed in the position to fail. Therefore, Dr. Elkind advises parents to let children be children.

Children today have too many caretakers performing as parents. When this situation occurs from the ages of 2 to 8, children feel rejected because of being left with others. If a child feels that the goals set before him are unattainable, he may become frustrated and fear being rejected by his parents for not fulfilling his parent's dream. Warning signs can include stomach aches, headaches, anxiety, depression, learning difficulties, and other symptoms of stress. Dr Hamden explains that kids may:

- act out in aggressive, socially unacceptable ways
- be defiant, agitated, or irritable
- lack concentration or have memory problems
- lack interest in socializing
- cry easily
- Experience sleep disturbances or changes in eating habits

Elkind gave some statistics of contemporary America showing-

- A 50% increase obesity in children over the last 20 years.
- A tripling of suicide and homicide rates over the last 20 years.
- 15-20% of young children are 'flunking' kindergarten.
- Million of children are being medicated to make them more 'tractable' at home and at school.

To avoid the rush, No one thinks it's a good idea to let kids spend all their free time vegging in front of the TV or PlayStation with nary a challenge to stimulate them. There are plenty of benefits for kids who are involved in a variety of activities While structured activities can enrich the child's life, just as important is unstructured play. A recent Australian study found that four and five year olds spend more time in organized, structured activities than in unstructured play ,as they get older their lives become more organized. **Michael C. Nagel**, author

of Nurturing A Healthy Mind, warns that trying to have children do too much too soon by performing certain tasks or producing certain results may also cause children undue stress beyond their limited coping abilities. Play is an important part of childhood and must not be hurried or transformed into work. In essence, pure play is needed to reduce stress and experience joy. Adults must not turn play into work and must not teach children during their play period. Everyone needs to spend some time each day at work/school, in recreation/relaxation, with family, and on spiritual growth. When play becomes work, that balance gets thrown off and life is neither productive nor fun.

Even more important is kid's relationship with their parents. If kids feel they can trust parents to support them when they fail, they're more likely to try new things. Likewise, if parents give them the room to become the person they want to be, not the person they've prescribed for them, they're more likely to be driven to achieve for the intrinsic joy of achieving rather than to earn parents love. Perhaps the best advice comes from Dr Elkind himself, who simply says parents should chill out a little and let children be children. They should understand and appreciate their children's feeling. Many alcoholics and drug users are using and/or abusing because they seek an escape from a life they find unmanageable. They are seeking to escape the pressure, stress, and unrealistic expectations of their parents.

Experts agree kids need unstructured time to play on their own. Dr Singhania suggests these tips for creating a healthy environment for imaginative play.

- **Chill out** Unstructured time should be just that – free of rules beyond those of courtesy and safety. Kids should feel laid back and should not feel that parents have any requirements of them other than to just have a good time.
- **Ditch the TV and computer games** Anyone who's ever seen a kid discard a toy and play with the box it came in knows that sometimes the least expensive toys are the ones that stimulate the imagination the most.
- **Supervise without orchestrating** Parents should make sure the kids are playing fairly, but should not stand over them. Keep safety in mind. Older kids will need time entirely on their own, while parents should watch that youngsters don't run into the street or turn on the oven.
- **Don't feel guilty** Though it may look like they're not parenting, allowing their children a safe environment in which to process everything they've learned, absorb new information, and apply what they know into their lives is just as important as time spent in a classroom.
- **Start early** There's nothing more tedious than a kid who can't amuse himself. Even small babies benefit from time to explore the world outside the confines of expectation.
- **Let the neighbors in** Kids enjoy playing with other kids. Imaginative interaction with other kids allows child to learn how to build relationships and solve problems naturally without an adult putting out every fire and resolving every conflict.

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