



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: I Just Need Some Space!

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As school winds down, and summer approaches, families are buried with some of the best events of the year that may feel like way too much to schedule. Ball practice, spring concerts, field trips, special picnics, recognition days, finals, proms, graduations all vie with the basics - homework, house and yard work and jobs.

Parents are busy trying to balance all of the expenses and requirements of the season, and may wish to say, "I just need some space!" It would be nice to have the time and space to take a walk, read a book, exercise, buy a new pair of shorts, or have coffee with a friend. But there is no time.

Kids seem to feel the same way. Until they are preteens, children adapt pretty well to the change of seasons from winter to spring. They enjoy longer days, playing outside and the sense of freedom that springtime brings. But preteens and teens are more likely to mirror adult frustration with balancing the events that go with their school year winding down toward summer. Rather than enjoying the special events, they begin to drag with expectations that cannot be met, worry about what their friends and parents expect of them and may also want to say, "I just need some space!"

Most of us have some trouble adapting to the time change and long daylight hours and may be short of sleep. We're angry, tired, and grumpy, eat too much or too little, have stomach aches, headaches, and generally feel miserable. All this adds up to trouble and produces more anxiety!!

How can we help ourselves and our kids cope with all of the expectations?

STOP! For just a few minutes, stop, back off from the schedule and take time to share a hug and have a quiet talk.

It is so important to say we care and want to help. Teens or adults who feel overwhelmed need to know that we care and recognize they are trying to do it all. “I know it’s hard to figure out how to handle it all, but let’s talk about it after work tonight.”

Help by listening to what is making them anxious without any judgment. “I know you’re feeling like quitting, there is just so much to do.” “I understand. You’re doing a lot very well.”

Encourage them to consider some options. “How about listing all these things, with the most important things first.” “Is there anything that can be put off?” “Let’s make a list of ideas.”

Offer help. “I can help you go over your history facts to prepare for the final.” “I could get up early to help you with delivering your newspapers for the next three days.” “Your hair looks good to me, but you can get it braided at the salon for the prom if you want. It is a special day.”

My friend Connie, a mom and teacher, always offers a hug and in a special reassuring tone says, “You’ll be OK!” It sounds trite. But it always makes me smile and take a deep breath when I am stressed. It works for anyone – all ages! Look into the mirror and say it. “You’ll be OK!”

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