



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

MENTAL HEALTH TIPS FOR THE BUSY FAMILY

The holiday season is past and 2007 is well under way. This time of year it's especially easy to get over extended and potentially cause stress and anxiety to our families and ourselves. If you feel each day is a race against the clock, it's likely you and your family may be over scheduled. Children in overscheduled families are more prone to stress, depression and lower self-esteem. Some experts suggest that children need strong family relationships for good development and mental health. Therefore, balance between scheduled activities and family time is important.

Jeanne M. Rohner, **President and CEO of the Mental Health Association of Colorado**, says, "Our children learn by example and one way to set a good example is to teach them how to set limits and make good decisions about time management and prioritization. These skills may seem unrelated to the promotion of mental health, but they are essential keys to helping children cope with stress and anxiety throughout their lives."

Here are some tips for parents and caregivers to follow in order to make life a little more relaxing and to help children feel at ease in busy times:

- **Brainstorm ways to slow down as a family.** Do you find yourself, frequently saying, "Hurry up, we are going to be late?" What activities can you or your children give up or decrease in frequency?
- **Set priorities for your family.** How many hours a week do you want to be together as a family?
- **Resolve to eat dinner together as a family at least 3-5 times a week**, even if this is a sandwich before you head out to a game or lesson.
- **Set family nights on your calendar.** Order pizza and play board games. Avoid scheduling anything else on family night.
- **Take time to play in creative ways.** Schedule "goof-off time" for your family and children. Give your child time to explore a hobby or play outside.
- **Take time as a family to enjoy nature** and the outdoors away from home. Go to a park for a picnic, enjoy a bike ride, take a hike, go skiing or sledding.

To learn more ways to promote family mental health, visit www.mhacolorado.org.

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About the Mental Health Association of Colorado

The Mental Health Association of Colorado, the Colorado affiliate of the National Mental Health Association, is the catalyst and voice for the Colorado mental health movement. Through Education, Advocacy and Outreach, we provide resources to Coloradoans affected by the entire spectrum of mental health issues.