

Balance is key in after-school activities for adolescents

August 29 2011, By Dru Clarke

How much is too much when it comes to after-school activities for adolescents?

Kansas State University's Dru Clarke, instructor of [curriculum](#) and instruction and a former high school teacher, says finding a healthy balance is key.

"Students who are too involved in one thing may limit themselves at a young age and not taste other ways to express themselves," Clarke said. "They also may not be devoting enough time to studying, which could affect their achievement or grades."

On the other hand, Clarke said not becoming involved can lead to isolation, [feelings](#) of rejection and [introspection](#).

"Seeking acceptance by a group is natural for adolescents," she said. "If they aren't involved in constructive and socially acceptable activities, then they may succumb to peer pressure in a bid to find acceptance, which may lead to [gangs](#) and deviant behavior."

Being involved in after-school activities gives [adolescents](#) a network of friends they can depend on.

"They help improve self-esteem, which helps students feel they can accomplish more -- even in the face of challenges, like struggling academically with a subject," Clarke said.

It's important for parents to give their children a spectrum of activities they can choose to be involved in, Clarke said. The choice of which activities to participate in, though, should be left up to the child.

"Parents who try to live their own unfulfilled lives through their children are not doing their kids any favors," she said. "Kids should follow their own interests, but they have to be given choices and opportunities to do this."

A tip Clarke gives to parents is to become active themselves, which provides a model for positive types of involvement, she said.

It may be difficult for an adolescent with a dysfunctional home life or [low self-esteem](#) to be adequately involved in activities, but adults who take an interest and get involved themselves can give much more than good advice, Clarke said.

"Turn off the electricity and find something to do that doesn't require a current of electrons," she said. "Kids look up to coaches and other role models."

Provided by Kansas State University

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