Extracurricular Activities: How much is too much? — By Georgia

When it comes to extracurricular activities such as sports, band, student government or clubs, it can be hard to know how many activities you can juggle. This is especially true if you have other commitments such as a part–time job or responsibilities at home such as caring for a younger sibling or helping a grandparent. First, think about the activities that seem interesting and then find out what is expected of participants. For example: How often do members meet? Is the activity in the fall/spring or both? Is the meeting time flexible? Does it cost anything to join the group/sport/etc.? Making an informed decision will help you to plan ahead so you can manage your time.

Before you “sign–up” for a particular activity, talk with others who have participated in it. You will likely get honest opinions that will help you make a decision about joining or not. It’s fun to spend time doing an activity that you are familiar with but don’t be afraid to try something new such as volunteering for your school paper or running for a class office.

There are benefits to participating in extracurricular activities such as meeting new people with similar interests, and being able to show college admission officers that you are well–rounded. But, you can have too much of a good thing. If your schedule is packed full with activities leaving you with little or no time to do homework, study for tests, or spend time with your family and friends, you may need to cut back on the number of activities you’re involved in. If you’re feeling stressed, talk to a parent, guidance counselor or other trusted adult.

Recipe: Peanut Butter Rocky Road Squares

Note: Desserts and sweets aren’t typically a good source of vitamins, minerals, or other nutrients that your body needs. It’s best to enjoy them occasionally, but not every day.

Ingredients:
- 6 cups Cocoa Puffs® cereal
- ¾ cup light corn syrup
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ cup peanut butter
- 2 cups min marshmallows
- ½ cup peanuts, coarsely chopped
- ½ cup semi–sweet chocolate chips

Steps:
1. Bring light corn syrup and sugar to boiling over medium heat in saucepan, stirring constantly
2. Remove from heat; stir in peanut butter until melted
3. Place cereal in a large bowl
4. Pour mixture over cereal and stir to coat well
5. Cool for 2 minutes, then stir in marshmallows
6. Press into ungreased 9 x 13 inch pan
7. Sprinkle with peanuts
8. Heat chocolate chips in a double boiler or in the microwave until melted and drizzle over bars
9. Let stand until chocolate is set
10. When cool, cut into 24 squares

— Makes 24 squares

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What's Alcohol Got to Do with It?  — By Alexa

Although many teens are aware of the legal drinking age and the consequences of consuming alcohol, most don’t seem to be a phased by television shows and movies that display scenes of underage drinking. In fact, if a show is about teens, drinking is almost always involved. I just think that if teens see this behavior over and over again on the screen, they’ll think its “normal” to drink at parties and at other social events.

An even bigger question is: Where is the fine line when teenage drinking becomes alcohol abuse? Alcohol abuse can have dangerous effects on your body at any age, but the impact to teens is huge. When you’re a teen your brain is still developing and too much alcohol consumption can interfere with important brain functions as well as put you at a greater risk for developing anxiety and/or depression. Research has shown that teens who drink before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become dependant on alcohol than individuals who start drinking at the legal age of 21. Alcohol is usually thought of as a depressant due to its ability to slow down the body’s vital functions including coordination, rational thinking, and judgment. People who depend on alcohol lack control, and that is a skill that girls and guys are developing during their teen years.

Alcohol can consume your life and put you in a dark place. Before you know it, you won’t be able to have a good time when you’re out with friends if you don’t have a couple of drinks. I feel like alcohol shouldn’t be used as a way to deal with problems. If you’re feeling like you “need” alcohol to have a good time, you may be dependent on it. Don’t think alcohol will take your problems away, instead, talk to a parent or trusted adult.