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A CORDON OF COURAGE

INSTEAD OF MUDDLED MADNESS IN FAMILY LIFE, ALLOW 'MARGIN' WHICH ALLOWS SPARE ROOM FOR CONVERSATIONS, PLAYING ON THE FLOOR, DRAWING WITH CHALK ON THE DRIVEWAY, FOLLOWING A BUTTERFLY AND RUNNING BAREFOOT OUTSIDE.

WORDS: JOANNE WILSON

This mid-year article is timely therapy for me so I hope it's vaguely helpful for you too! It's about too much, too often, too soon and often at the same time.

Not only does it have a detrimental impact on my wellbeing, but that of the children. It certainly is nothing to be proud of. In a world that often lauds a hectic, action-packed lifestyle, busyness is not a badge of honour.

How's your schedule? Can you spontaneously fit in a drink and a play with the neighbours or do they need to wait three weeks? Do you allow time in your weekday either with children after school or for you with nil commitments? I mean, nothing.

Do you worry your children won't be the best versions of themselves if they're not involved in all the wonderful activities on offer on the Sunshine Coast?

What if they miss out on finding their true gift? What if their friends learn new skills

that yours don't? What if...?

It is well documented that overloading and pushing ourselves and our children is harmful. Did you know there's a noticeable shift in our generation of children that are gradually moving away from an internal toward external locus of control?

That is, they're focussing more on external methods to find happiness instead of within. They're so overstimulated, entertained and surrounded by toys, they're losing the ability to self-regulate, self-soothe and find contentment for themselves. Frightening! No wonder the rise in anxiousness, depression and narcissism.

To make this all happen, parents are "milkshake multitasking" as neuroscientist Dr Caroline Leaf calls it. She says we can shift between different tasks in rapid succession but it's impossible to multitask.

This results in neurochemical chaos and

brain damage. As we're frantically switching between that email to pay the footy and dance fees, checking Instagram and listening to our child read; there's nothing of quality occurring and we're easily confused and exhausted.

Allow "margin". It's my favourite word that connotes that space on the side of your page. It's spare room for attentive conversations, playing on the floor, drawing with chalk on the driveway, following a butterfly and running barefoot outside.

I was one of the lucky ticket-holders of a home bike stunt show recently. It was complete with hand-drawn tickets, promotional signs and obstacles. Priceless! Margin can be the column for one-on-one time with a child without guilt and time pressure.

It's the allocated distance between your to-do list on the other side of the paper that's

lined with endless tasks.

Little Johnny and Janita are more likely to become masters of their destiny if we allow them the breadth to do so.

We can certainly nurture their talents, but let's not scrawl over their childhood with busyness in the process!

I don't want a medallion of muddled madness, but a cordon of courage. It will signify we bravely didn't scribble chaos in our blank margins of life that encouraged the children to inner resourcefulness to face life's challenges resulting in their innovation and success.

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