



From a Parent's Perspective

by Roslyn Duffy

No 'Hang' Time

– Situation –

At noon in Seattle, it is already 3 pm in New York and 9 am the next day in Singapore or Australia, but for many children how that time gets used does not change much from place to place.

In Singapore, children spend their days at school, their afternoons doing homework and taking part in music, tutorial, or sports programs. On the weekends, they take special enrichment classes.

In Seattle and New York, children spend their days at school, their afternoons playing soccer, baseball, and doing homework. On the weekends, they join their teams for competitions, work on school projects, or maybe take part in pottery classes.

In Australia, children spend their days at school, their afternoons at sports or after-school programs, and their evenings doing homework. On weekends, they play sports, watch sports, and maybe practice their instruments.

These are the lives of children with some affluence, filled to bursting with the largesse of material things but lacking one crucial commodity.

– Solution –

When do children just *hang*? *Hang* is American shorthand for *hanging out*. The meaning is not very complex. *Hang* is basically doing nothing — intentionally. It is a time to hang onto some part of the globe and just let it rotate with you. It seems that no matter where on that globe many children tread, their feet don't get to stop moving, or their hands, their fingers, or all the rest of their body parts. There is just very little *hang* time, anywhere.

Wherever technology touches down to save us time and effort, we seem to become obsessed with the need to do more. *More* defines many children's lives. Our children must do more, learn more, and have more. For children to have more, adults must earn more and therefore work more, which means there is less time to be with these children to whom we are giving more. More results in less time.

Because time becomes less, we must find ways to cram more into it. Parents get out the scheduling books and start filling in pages for their children so that their children can learn more, which will help them be better able to earn more and have more.

Whew! Don't you get tired just reading about it? Add to that the common complaint parents hear when there is actually a moment in the hustle of a day left unfilled, "Mommy, I'm bored!" Even our children don't know how to *hang*.

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Is *hang* time important, worthwhile, and desirable? I remember a story: There was an explorer traveling in a remote part of the world. He had hired numerous natives of the region to help him carry his supplies. At one point after an intense three-day trek, his helpers all sat down and stopped moving. He tried to get them to continue, but not one budged. He paced and stomped and threw his hat down in exasperation and asked the head guide why the others refused to move. The guide looked at him and said, "We must rest here a while."

The man demanded to know why. The speaker explained, "We must allow our spirits to catch up with our bodies." It seems they had been moving so fast that their bodies and spirits could not stay intact, so they had stopped to allow them to connect back up. And there they sat.

Isn't that a great image — that we somehow leave parts of our very souls scattered in disarray behind us when we move too quickly across this earth? When I travel, I think of this story. Modern-day parlance for allowing our spirits and minds to catch up with our bodies might be what we refer to as jet lag. As I sit munching my snack peanuts, I can visualize a trail of little particles of my inner self floating along, trying to keep up with the speed of the plane. They get blown astray, left to search and scramble toward each other

as they seek out the rest of me. No wonder I am tired when I stumble down the ramp upon arriving hundreds or thousands of miles ahead of those myriad particles of myself.

Life-Lag

It sometimes seems as if the lives many children experience are a massive case of life-lag. They rush from classroom to dance studio to basketball court. Somewhere between the hurried breakfast, the rushed trip to the grocery store, and the last-minute stop for school supplies, their spirits are getting scattered like confetti, broadcast from doorstep to car door to school desk.

Is it time for you and your child to just sit a moment and let the cells regroup? Maybe we can all learn from the wisdom of that unknown native guide. The day does not need to be stuffed like a holiday turkey or crammed to capacity like a too-small suitcase.

Memory Makers

What do you remember with most fondness about your early years? Is it the extra spelling lesson you labored over one weekend or the time you sat with your dad listening to the rain pound on the patio roof after a hot, sticky day? Is it an additional day of soccer practice or licking the drips from an ice cream cone with your visiting aunt at the kitchen table? Is it the clay

pot you made at weekend art class or walking the dog with Grandpa and kicking through piles of fallen leaves? Spelling, team sports, and art experiences are all valuable, but it is *hang* time that often provides the memories for our souls.

Look up and see if you can spy any loose bits of your spirit or your child's drifting overhead. Then stop and sit quietly. Watch as a faint cloud begins to form as the particles coalesce, then feel them float back down as your spirits reconnect with each of you. Experience that moment of wholeness. Just for today, *hang* — and may your hearts overflow with treasured memories, for then you will truly have *more*.

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*What problems do you experience? Send a description, a short word "snapshot" of the situation, to **From a Parent's Perspective**. Each month, we will address your real-life issues. To assure confidentiality, names of those submitting problems will not appear. Elements of several problems may be combined for this column. Only situations appearing in the column receive responses.*