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**The Mad Dash**

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Switch

I have this tendency to start looking for something and proceed to tear the entire room, throwing cushions and unstacking stacks and creating general mayhem. About halfway through this process I realize that I have completely forgotten what I was looking for. I then proceed to stand there sheepishly as I see the exact item I was looking for posed elegantly in the middle of the now-destroyed room. This whole event occurs no less than three times a week.

I am currently enrolled in no less than three sports teams, three charity organizations and a mock trial team, all of which I try to juggle while doing ridiculous amounts of homework and somehow trying to write something worth reading. On my worst days I wake up at 5 a.m. and get bounced from one activity to another until 9:30 at night, at which point I get to begin the beautiful homework pile I've been given. Even on the "easy" days I often work from sunrise to sunset. I'm not bragging or complaining, as I really do love most activities I am involved in; I am simply laying down the facts. But the thing is, I am not some

over-scheduled freak of nature; this is not unusual for a modern teen. I know several people that juggle even more, and most people have a similar load. But why are we doing all this, why do we choose to nearly bury ourselves alive in commitment after commitment? To get into a good college? To get a good job and live in a good neighborhood? To constantly live for the next goal, working like mules until we're 80 and looking back and wondering where time went?

The truth is, I don't know why I keep picking up activity after activity. I don't know what I'm working for. I'm just tearing through life, bringing mayhem upon myself, completely having forgotten what I'm searching for. And I feel like I'm not alone. Few us know what we're doing, or why we do it. We just keep blindly toiling on, missing each day in preparation of the uncertain future instead of the definite present. I know I shouldn't be living this way, losing today for the sake of tomorrow. And yet I can't stop. Just last Thursday, I made the last-minute decision to add a fourth community service organization into the mix. I didn't particularly want to join, and yet I couldn't not join for fear that I would regret it later (and now, ironically enough, I'm regretting joining).

I'm 15. I have another 50 years or so to be worried and exhausted all the time. I should be out having fun with my friends, reading anything and everything, rocking out to painfully loud music, lying on my bedroom floor and staring at the ceiling fan and just thinking about life. I should have a schedule that allows for movie nights, road trips, impromptu adventures with my friends and last-minute water polo tournaments in Las Vegas. I should be learning, growing, finding myself, and doing a million other things that have no place on a college app. We all should, really. There is no shame in taking the time to be happy. We won't find the future we have in mind if we just stop searching, working, altogether. But if we calm down and look around, we just might find something better.

1. Do you get involved in a lot of school and/or community activities? What are they?
2. Why do you get involved? If you’re not involved, why not?
3. Do you think at your age you can do too little or too much? Where is the balance? Explain.
4. Do you think activities add stress or provide stress relief? Explain.
5. What do you think of the author’s conclusion on the issue?
6. Do you think activities help you find your place in life or keep you from exploring more? Explain.
7. What does it mean to you to “take time to be happy.” Explain.

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