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**Pallavi R Mangrulkar**  
Department of Nursing,  
Dr. Vithalrao Vikhe Patil  
Foundation's College of  
Nursing, Ahmednagar,  
Maharashtra, India

### The hurried child syndrome

**Pallavi R Mangrulkar**

#### Abstract

When we look back to our life in 90's, we realize that it was a kind of carefree & with less stress. We learned most of the things by outdoor play, group plays, simulation plays etc. We were given adequate freedom & exposure by our parents to learn things through plays & there was no any restriction & thus we were prepared to take responsibilities of adulthood. They did not hurry us to grow. We live in a time regulated society, where the focus is more on speed, immediate results and services, fast foods etc. ultimately this results in raising a hurried child.

**Keywords:** Hurried child syndrome, age appropriate responsibility, superkid, miseducation

#### Introduction

Are you pushing your children too hard to grow up fast? Are you expecting them to understand the situations around you, like you do? Are you expecting them to behave well mannered & disciplined like you do? Then you may be doing a big mistake. In this competitive, fast-paced world, parents want their kids to excel in every field. But often, we don't realize that by doing so, we are raising a "hurried child". It is a term proposed by child psychologist Dr. David Elkind, in his book, *The Hurried Child: Growing up too fast* <sup>[1]</sup>.

We live in a time regulated society, where the focus is more on speed, immediate results and services, fast foods etc! It takes great strength and discipline to try and lead a slower pace of life, so most people flow with the fast current – and, according to Elkind, this fast current is growing rapidly faster <sup>[3]</sup>.

#### Definition of hurried child syndrome

A condition in which parents over-schedule their children's lives, push them hard for academic success, and expect them to behave and react as miniature adults <sup>[2]</sup>.

#### Age-appropriate demands

You have to match the responsibilities given to your child with his age and actual ability. For example, you can ask a two-year-old to replace his toys back to storage and clear his plate from the dining table but you cannot expect a 7-8 year-old child to understand the differences in your married or your divorced life.

#### Causes of hurried child syndrome

Dr. David Elkind, explains three major dynamics of hurrying – parents, schools and the media.

#### Parents

Parents see their children as a miniature adult instead of understanding their level of knowledge, grasping, understanding & perception. Parents are so stressed in their life i.e. The stress of fear, loneliness and insecurity, the stress of divorce and single parenting, the stress of living in a time of rapid change and impermanence – all this leaves little or no energy for enthusiastic child-rearing. And, parents 'who are stressed, like those in ill health, are absorbed with themselves – egocentric'.

This form of hurrying occurs because the parents, through parental ego more than parental need, want 'superkids', and therefore are attempting to teach their infants to read, to do gymnastics, and more, at an age when they simply should be playing and enjoying childhood. Elkind calls this 'miseducation' and sees it as a 'social invention to alleviate parental anxiety and guilt'.

**Correspondence**  
**Pallavi R Mangrulkar**  
Department of Nursing,  
Dr. Vithalrao Vikhe Patil  
Foundation's College of  
Nursing, Ahmednagar,  
Maharashtra, India

### Schools

Our product-oriented and industrialized schools are the second dynamic of 'hurrying'. Most schools ignores individual differences, and the downward thrust of the curriculum is adding to the miseducation and thus hurrying of our children. Now a days passing exams is more important than meaningful & useful education & is mainly work centric.

### Media

The third dynamic, the media, which is most responsible for extending and ultimately 'hurrying' our senses. Dr. Elkind points out the fact that young children watch the most TV of all children. Our young children today are often exposed to information beyond their developmental needs and understanding. The media is also equally responsible for hurrying children through both information and emotional overload [3].

### In other words the causes include

1. Working families or being a single parent
2. Seeking the child to be "a super kid"
3. Unrealistic expectations on children about academic performance
4. The pseudo sophistication

### The effects of hurrying up the child

**Physical effects:** These children experience the physical symptoms such as headache, sleep deprivation, ulcers, stomach aches, stammering, muscle twitching & hyperactivity, less attention span etc.

**Psychological effects:** The main psychological effect these children will experience is stress. They will exhibit the fear of getting along with others, enjoying own company, difficulty in getting social, stress to meet parents expectations & fear to get rejected by parents if the expectations are not met, depression, suicidal tendencies, anxiety-promoted memory lapses and an exaggerated fear of failure [4].

### Ways to prevent

- Know your Child- Know his strengths & weaknesses.
- Chill out- allow children to have unstructured play time- free of rules & beyond those of courtesy and safety. Kids should feel laid back and should not feel that you have any requirements of them other than to just have a good time.
- Ditch the TV and computer games. Try more of outdoor games.
- Supervise without disturbing- Make sure the kids are playing fairly, but don't stand over them. Keep their safety in mind obviously. Older kids will need time entirely on their own, while you should watch that youngsters don't run into the streets or harm themselves.
- Don't feel guilty Though it may look like you're not parenting, allowing your children a safe environment in which to process everything they've learned, absorb new information, and apply what they know into their lives is just as important as time spent in a classroom.
- Allow kids to play & learn at their own pace.
- Let them learn through their own experiences, their own mistakes, by their own understanding & by their

own achievements.

- Let the neighbours in - Kids enjoy playing with other kids. Imaginative interaction with other kids allows your child to learn how to build relationships and solve problems on their own [5].
- Appreciate their efforts no matter if it a failure also. Appreciation from parents is more important. The irony in the world is that no one believes in hurrying children. No one believes in pressuring children to do things well beyond their capabilities. "I don't believe in hurrying children but," And there is always a "but". Few examples are - A parent says, "I don't believe in hurrying but if I don't put my child in camp, he will have no one to play with and won't make the team.", "I don't believe in hurrying but the curriculum says I have to teach reading in kindergarten". If we want healthy, happy children who can compete in an increasingly global economy we have to get beyond the But & should use what we know about healthy childrearing and education [6].

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