

# GIRLS' LIFE

It's  
**2023!**  
We know  
what you're  
wearing  
(Hint: Bedazzled  
barrettes)

Psst:  
**Your  
crush  
is into  
you**

Did you miss  
\*this\* tiny sign?

Your  
completely  
**cozy  
room  
redo**

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OK, can we spend  
the holidays with  
Shay Rudolph?

YOUR HOLIDAY  
**Beauty  
Starter  
Pack**  
SO. MUCH.  
SPARKLE!

**Our gift  
guide  
has zero  
misses**

**RECLAIM  
YOUR  
CHILL  
TIME**

December/January 2023  
Vol 29, Issue 3





HOW CAN



Busy bees, listen up: Let's make chilling out a top priority.

I MAKE TIME

FOR ME?

BY KATHLEEN O'NEILL



**S**chool. Extracurriculars. Homework. Sleep. Repeat. No doubt about it, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by a relentless agenda. And with increasing pressure for girls to be well-rounded in order to boost their college applications, the problem has only become more prevalent: More than half of high schoolers feel stressed by a lack of time to chill out or hang with friends.

Don't get us wrong, a packed planner certainly has its benefits. "A busy schedule helps prepare you for the real world after high school," says social worker Jenny Noia-Gilson, who counsels teens. "You can learn a lot about time management and handling different responsibilities."

But low-key moments are just as necessary. "Downtime is crucial for your body and brain," explains high school counselor and life coach Jennifer Close. Relaxing lets your mind reset—which can help boost your creativity and overall energy levels (just consider how refreshed you feel after a peaceful morning walk, lunch date with your bestie or afternoon reading sesh).

Struggling to carve out you time in your day-to-day? Take a deep breath and hear this: It *is* possible to optimize your agenda and finally find balance.

## REVAMP YOUR ROUTINE

First things first: Take stock of your current schedule to make sure that what you're spending hours on is, well, what you *actually* want to be doing.

"I felt like I had zero time to relax at the start of the school year," shares Maddy S., 15. "Turns out I just wasn't using my time wisely by constantly procrastinating on my homework and putting off my chores."

Open your journal or your Notes app and for a week or two jot down what you're up to every hour of the day (be honest!). You might find some surprises, like that you spend over three hours a day scrolling your social media feeds (eek). Or that, while you feel like you have no time for friends, you actually spend most of lunch catching up with them.

For Maddy, once she streamlined her study plan and set limits on her phone, the free time she thought was impossible to find suddenly showed up. "Now I can try new hobbies, like piano and painting," she says. So clear out the clutter on your cal and make room for *\*way\** more of the fun stuff.

## SCHEDULE YOUR SELF-CARE

Now that you've cleaned up your daily docket, how do you want to spend those newfound hours? "Think about the way you best decompress physically, mentally and emotionally," Close says. "Some teens need to slow down to recharge, while others need a more active approach."

Maybe you feel happiest curled up on the couch, snacks in hand, rewatching old eps of *Gilmore Girls*. Or maybe your ideal form of relaxation is heading out on a run or hitting the slopes with your sis.

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Whatever it is, ink it in so you're sure to stick to it. "Put it on your calendar, just as you would a babysitting gig or choir rehearsal," suggests Noia-Gilson. Not only does that ensure your solo trip to wander the bookstore or a sandwich run with your girls happens—it also gives you something to look forward to in your busier moments.

And on those jam-packed weeks where you can't seem to grab a minute (ugh, why did your huge lit presentation and ballet recital fall within 24 hours of each other)? Take advantage of tiny spaces in your day.

Hopping in the shower before school? Listen to a fun podcast (waterproof speakers work wonders!). Got a 30-minute drive to the dance studio? Ask Dad to swing by Starbucks so you can grab your fave Frapp before rehearsal.

And no matter how crazy your day, Close suggests taking a sec before bed to indulge in a brief self-care sesh, like doing a five-minute yoga flow or reading a chapter in your comfort novel. These mini moments may seem simple, but don't underestimate how much they count.

## DECIDE WHEN TO DITCH

If an ongoing stressful sched is starting to wreak havoc on your mental health, re-evaluate what's on your plate.

Burned out from a month straight of figure skating practice plus your part-time holiday retail job? It's OK to ask for a break. Try saying, "Hey Coach, I'm feeling overwhelmed with my responsibilities right now, and I want to make sure that I'm giving practice my all. I think a day off might help. Could I take next Thursday to rest up?" Remember: Even one or two days to unwind can give you the refresh you need.

If an activity is causing more stress than satisfaction, consider this permission to let it go. Jillian T., 14, was spending every afternoon rehearsing for the school play when she knew deep down that she didn't even like acting. "I told the director that I needed to move in a different direction. Now I actually have time for my favorite things—and I'm so much happier." After all, there's no shame in quitting an activity that takes up a huge chunk of your life and no longer is bringing you joy.

Once you start thinking of chill time as a healthy (and v. important) happiness habit, you'll realize that your agenda should absolutely accommodate some meaningful moments of fun—even during your busiest days. And couldn't we all use a little more of that? 