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chaos

THEORY

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How to do it all—**sports, school, life**—
while staying calm and collected.

STORY BY *Diana Kelly*

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Lydia Carra hits the ground running—literally.

The Bridgewater-Raritan High School senior from Bridgewater, N.J., has varsity cross-country practice in the afternoons, but squeezes in an extra 30 to 45-minute morning run several days a week during her fall season. Then, after getting dressed and ready, Lydia makes sure she arrives at school about 20 minutes early to “get organized for her day.” And organized she must be in order to stay on top of everything in her packed life: AP classes, her student council president position, editing the yearbook sports section, volunteering for the Special Olympics, working as a lifeguard and playing varsity lacrosse in the spring for the 5th-ranked high school in the state. Whew! It’s exhausting just reading that lineup.

Turns out a lot of you are managing crazy schedules just like Lydia’s. And figuring out how to juggle it all can get overwhelming. So we’ve put together a survival guide for fitting it all in—school, sports, chores, work—and still finding time for the fun stuff. Friends. Family. And, oh yeah, you.

Work Smart

Practice hours and game schedules can add up quickly on the calendar; when you work in other club meetings or commitments to an after-school job, it can be easy to let homework and study time slip. But keeping your grades up can be the difference between getting a college recruiting offer and landing on the undesirable list. So how do top student-athletes keep their student sides strong?

> **Maximize free time at school.** Lydia leverages her lunch hour to great effect: "Most of the time I am in the library, getting extra help from teachers, or working on stuff for the yearbook or student council." And Erin Giles, a sophomore softball player at Scarborough High School in Scarborough, Maine, makes sure she gets her homework done during study hall. If she has a light workload one week, Erin asks her teachers about upcoming assignments so that she can work ahead.

> **Beware of social networking black holes.**

But Erin admits, "Sometimes I become very inefficient since I am drawn away from my studies every couple of minutes by texts or Facebook posts." Dave Crenshaw, author of *The Myth of Multitasking*, suggests setting your phone to silent while you study so that it doesn't beep every time a message pops up. "Then, take breaks and respond to all messages at the same time." You'll do better work and, when you do answer, your friends will get your full attention.



ACCORDING TO A PEW RESEARCH CENTER PUBLICATION, girls ages 14-17 typically send more than 100 texts per day—that's more than 3,000 per month!



Play Hard—But Not Too Hard

Whitney Jaynes, a Plano West senior from Plano, Tex., who's on the U-17 women's national soccer team, does daily skill work after her varsity soccer and club team practices, focusing on speed training, conditioning and technique for an hour or two a day. Then she still needs to eat dinner and do homework, which means she "probably ends up getting to bed at midnight." It's worth it to Whitney, because soccer and working out are her "getaways" when she gets stressed, but, like all teens, she needs to pay more attention to recharging so she doesn't overdo it.

> **Rest and recovery are crucial parts of any training plan.** Dr. Alan Goldberg, a sports psychology consultant in Amherst, Mass., says it's okay to play for club teams in addition to your high school team, but warns that too much repetition without giving your body a break could result in overuse injuries. "Make rest part of your training," he advises. Plus, your teen years are a time of growth for your body—if you want to maximize your physical potential, you need to give your body the right support. That means, "Sleep enough and eat the right foods," Goldberg says. Eight to 10 hours of shut-eye per night is a good target for most teens. "You shouldn't feel guilty for taking some time off; it's important and will help you in the long run."



Being Well-Rounded Is Worth It

When San Leandro, Calif., shot-putter and discus thrower Kaeleigh Thorp graduates from Encinal High next spring, she'll have three associate's degrees from taking online college classes, and she's already logged more than 1,600 hours of community service. Not everyone can juggle quite that much, but everyone can learn this:

> **Try something new—it could become a passion.** Kaeleigh's extra degrees all started with a single class that she decided to "just try." New activities, classes and sports can keep you motivated and excited, and can keep things fresh for when you return to your old favorites. Plus, now is the time in your life to have fun and experiment with new interests. If you later discover you don't have time for an activity or don't enjoy it, you can always drop it, but at least you'll know you tried.

> **Find a way to combine sports with service.** Another approach is to follow Palo Alto High water polo player Skylar Dorosin's lead. The junior from Palo Alto, Calif., matched her love of sports with a community service project, by starting a water polo program at a local Boys and Girls Club. During the summer, Skylar runs the program and coaches 9- to 11-year-olds in between her own team's practices. Giving back to her community gives Skylar a sense of accomplishment, but combining it with her existing sports schedule allows her to fit it all in without too much added stress.

HOW MUCH SCHOOLWORK IS TOO MUCH?

A Duke University research review found that kids who do some homework in middle and high school score a bit better on standardized tests, but doing more than 2 hours a night in high school is actually associated with lower scores.



Make Time for the Fam

Squeezing in quality time with Mom and Dad or with your siblings can be really hard with everything else you're trying to do during the school year.

> **Sports can bring families together, too.** "My brother loves coming to my games," says Skylar. And Raquel Wildes, a varsity basketball and floor hockey player at Ramaz, a Jewish private school in New York City, takes it one step further: Her whole family loves playing hoops, and plays pickup in the driveway at home as often as they can. During the warmer summer months, her family invites friends over to swim in their pool so they can stay active and maximize time with all of their loved ones.

What to Do When You're Overwhelmed

When schoolwork stresses her out, Lydia gets out of the house to take breaks. "This is when running, the gym and yoga classes really come in handy to help me relax and refocus." Erin says keeping her planner up to date helps her stay organized and calm. "I recommend planning out in advance what you want to do. Sometimes things will conflict, but if you plan, you can find free time." And while going for a run or writing in a planner might not sound like similar strategies, here's what they have in common:

> **Figure out what works for you.** Organizational expert Crenshaw reminds us that understanding your own personal productivity rhythm is the best way to manage stress, even as you figure out how to get everything done. "Some people might do best working on one task for 20 minutes at a time and then changing tasks. Others might do better locking down for three or four hours to get something done," he says. When Lydia takes a break, a run helps clear her head. When Erin stops, seeing where she stands on her to-do list puts everything back in perspective. So ask yourself, "What's my rhythm? Am I a sprinter or a long-distance runner?" Then tackle your workload with the method that suits you best. And if things feel like too much to handle ...

> **Ask for help.** "There are always teachers, coaches and teammates willing to help you out when you need it," says Lydia. And she's right. Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek advice from people who have already done what you want to do. "Trust the people around you, knowing they will always have your back."

Finding Time for Friends

The cool thing about your friends—aside from all the things you love to do together and talk about—is that they're trying to figure out the same juggling act that you are.

> **Make a pact to support each other, and look for little bits of time here and there to reconnect.** Raquel uses her hour-long bus ride home after floor hockey or basketball practice to chat with friends. If she has to do more schoolwork than socializing one weekend, she'll make a date with her friends the next weekend for quality catch-up time.

> **Budget your time the way you do with your allowance.** Crenshaw suggests sitting down and calculating how many hours you can spend on fun things and friends each week. Then pencil it into your planner! It sounds nerdy, but it'll ensure that you don't forget your friend's surprise party or your weekly hike with your boyfriend when things start to get hectic. Another great tip?

> **Make sure you're not overscheduled.** "Or you'll be miserable," he says. Learning to say no occasionally will help keep you in control of your schedule, not the other way around.

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"How can I stay organized in style?"

Look smart and stay sharp with one of our recommended student organizers. Go to ESPNRISE.COM and search "student planners."

Ask ESPN RISE

"Is there an app for that? What can I download to make getting organized easier?"

Go to ESPNRISE.COM and search "back-to-school apps" for our top 5 list!

Sleep: The Ultimate Performance Enhancer

Getting extra sleep over an extended period of time will improve your athletic performance, alertness and mood, according to research presented at a sleep convention last June in San Antonio, Tex. College football players' sprint times improved significantly after seven to eight weeks of extra shut-eye, where athletes aimed for at least 10 hours a night. And in 2009, members of the Stanford women's tennis team participated in a nine-week study that showed that players who logged more than eight hours a night ran faster sprint times and hit more accurate shots than teammates who slept less. Cheri Mah of the Stanford Sleep Disorders Clinic and Research Laboratory in Stanford, Calif., suggests teens doze for nine or more hours per night and keep to a regular routine of hitting the sack and waking up around the same times each day.