

Meet the *Dodds*

This Katy family of eight makes staying active a priority while creating memorable family time

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Select photography by Juliana Evans*



The Dodds participate in many activities together including fun runs, soccer, and family dance parties

*W*ith two boys and four girls, Paul and Amy Dodd are beyond busy. Aside from the understandable chaos of getting so many children ready for the day, they also rush their six children to various appointments and activities. “Those that meet us always seem so surprised when they hear we have six because we just go, go, go,” Amy says.

In Constant Motion

Although the sheer number of family members alone would keep anyone occupied, they also maintain an active lifestyle that often demands their attention during the evening hours. How do they do it? Between two different soccer schedules for sons Avery, 11, and Ashton, 9, and dance for daughter Scarlett Grace, 5, these parents divide and conquer.

Amy takes Scarlett Grace to dance at Connolly Dance Arts, and Paul takes one of the boys to soccer, while they leave adopted daughter Sophie, 3, and their identical twin daughters Anna-Claire and Ella-Kate, 2, at home with the babysitter. Next year, the younger three girls will join gymnastics or dance, which will add another complex level to their balancing act.

Active Mom

It isn't just the kids who get moving. Amy has run five marathons and trains between one and two-and-a-half hours every day either at the gym or outside. "A working out lifestyle for me is [like] the normal person waking up and brushing their teeth. It's natural. I couldn't live without that," Amy says. In the future, she ultimately hopes to complete an Ironman, which includes a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2-mile run.

Adapting Plans

With six children and eight schedules, the Dodds have to plan every day meticulously. Every detail of every appointment, practice, and game is written on a calendar. Yet, Paul says, "One thing you can count on with six kids: While you can plan everything out, plans always change." They also embrace the spontaneous by often taking spur-of-the-moment weekend trips as a family to Enchanted Rock to hike, local farms to pick berries, and fun runs like the 5K Foam Fest Mud Run. These trips give the Dodd kids some of their fondest family memories.

Making the Most of Family Time

With such a long to-do list, is it difficult for the Dodds to find family time together? Paul laughs, "It's always family time." Together they enjoy swimming, fishing, going to plays, crafting, volunteering at Sunrise Senior Living, and playing basketball and football.

Family Dance Parties

At least once a week, they also have a family dance party. Even Amy's workouts can turn into family time as Paul and the kids join her to cycle for an hour on Saturdays. Regardless of the activity, they do it together.



Ella, Paul, Amy, Anna, Avery, Scarlett, Ashton, and Sophie Dodd

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— Amy Dodd

Why activities are important to the Dodds

- Builds their confidence
- They gain social skills
- They learn it's not always about being first
- Their own activities give them a chance to be individuals
- It provides challenges
- They have fun with friends



The Dodds love competing as a family, especially in fun events such as the color run

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Limiting TV and Video Games

One activity no one in the Dodd family does often is watch TV or play video games. “During the school year, we don’t turn on the TV, except for a family movie night once a week,” Amy says. Although the kids occasionally play on the iPad, Paul and Amy encourage outdoor, active play over electronic entertainment.

Unlike some kids who have several activities during every season of the year, the Dodd kids must choose what they are involved in wisely. “They get one or maybe two activities a year,” Paul says. “We actually limit it so the family has more time together.” As a result, the Dodds have never faced common problems like their kids wanting to quit activities before a season’s end or their kids’ school work suffering from overbooked schedules.

Although the Dodds dash from place to place, their eight-person family loves spending time together and welcomes life’s adventures as a united, active family. **KM**

LACEY KUPFER WULF is a freelance writer and the third of five kids. She is expecting a set of twins this fall.

Special thanks to the Katy Family YMCA for lending us their facility to capture the photography for this story.



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