Think of a beautiful memory from your childhood.

Kim John Payne calls these “golden moments.” He has found that the treasured recollections are “always unhurried, simple memories.”

They are “moments about connection to friends and family and nature … it’s never about rushing to a soccer game or piano lessons … it’s never about rush, never about hurry and always about simplicity.”


“The main theme I’m going to be talking about is about balance and simplicity,” said Payne. “I really question the fever pitch of family life.” His goal is not to tell parents to do anything, but rather to help parents uncover their own ways to simplify and declutter.

“I’m talking to parents about how they can dial back the clutter, from physical clutter to scheduling clutter to emotional clutter,” said Payne.

Payne worked for many years in the developing world, in refugee camps in war zones. He saw highly stressed children every day as they fled war. But when he moved back to the West, “I saw the same look in children’s eyes.” He saw typical children carrying so much stress. “I thought, something is really wrong here and came to think of it as an undeclared war on childhood.”

In talking to other parents, he realized that he wasn’t the only one who felt something was off. “So many parents are now starting to question and say, ‘Hey, something is wrong’ at a gut, instinctual level.”
Payne penned a book about the concept of parenting simply, which has sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and the movement has spawned 500 trained Parenting Coaches working with parents around the world.

Payne wants parents to step back from over-scheduling and material things, which he believes are “making it hard to connect with kids.”

“I’m suggesting that parents allow kids to rediscover the gift of boredom.”

Payne does not, however, want to hearken back to an older era; he believes his message is actually rooted in the future. In order for children to become creative, adaptive and innovative adults, Payne believes they must be allowed to develop those skills now. They need downtime to develop crazy projects, said Payne. Instead, he sees many kids engaged in highly structured play, and they are “dependent on people to set stuff up for them.”

He worries, too, about how the use of technology will affect children. So much of the online world, he says, is about “someone else’s creativity” and not developing one’s own.

But his overall message is universal. He hopes parents can connect with their golden memories from childhood and from that, develop their own instinctual route to simplicity. “We know what our kids are going to remember — simple things, slow things.”