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Routines Age 9 Summary

Why Routines?

Establishing regular routines can help your family get through the day cooperatively while growing vital skills in your child. Remember that your child feels safe because they know what to expect and are better able to learn from the rich experiences you share every day. Changes to your routine - expected and unexpected - can help your child learn to be flexible and practice adjusting to new situations when you guide them with confidence and sensitivity.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.



- Ask questions to invite your child into a dialogue with you:
    - *"Let's think about our typical day. What do we need to do when we get up in the morning?"* (brush teeth, eat breakfast)
    - *"What do we like to do in the morning?"* (watch a show, play)
    - "*What can be challenging when it's morning, and we are trying to get to school on time?"* (Ask key questions about those specific challenges to understand what's challenging for your child.)
    - *"I notice you tend to slow down when it's time to get dressed. Why is that time a challenge for you?"*
- Each time there is an opportunity, ask your child, *"What do you notice? How do you feel?"* If your child is unsure how to describe their emotions when a routine changes, consider asking questions, naming what you notice, and leaving plenty of quiet space after your questions so they can share their ideas. *"How did you feel when I told you we would do something different today?"*
- When reading books, point out routines that seem comforting and moments when those routines changed. Ask, *"How do you think that character is feeling? What happened when their day changed?"*

Trap Your child will give you many cues about whether the routines you develop feel too complicated or too simple and if they are followed consistently enough for your child to feel secure. Every child is different, and your child may change daily in how willing they are to follow a routine or how much help they need to manage planned and unplanned changes in routines.



Teach New Skills

- After discussing the routine and its challenges in Step 1, brainstorm solutions to your identified challenges. For example, when discussing your morning routine, you may have identified that you tend to start making multiple requests when it's time to get dressed. Generate ideas together.
    - *"What exactly about getting dressed is a challenge for you?"*
    - *"What ideas do you have to deal with those challenges?"*
- Now, write down or draw your plan with each simple step. Let your child do the writing or drawing so they feel a sense of ownership in the plan you are developing.
    - For ages 5-7: Get a poster board, newsprint paper, or plain paper and markers. Have your child write out their routine in the simplest terms, such as: 1. Wake up! 2. Get dressed. Young children can draw instead.
    - For ages 8-10: Create a checklist of their routine on a whiteboard. Children at this age enjoy checking off a list.
- Post their plan in a visible location.
- Teach your child how to perform the routine. If there are new responsibilities or challenges, be sure you've tried those steps together first.
    - Teachers use a simple process called interactive modeling that can become a powerful teaching tool for parents.[1]
        - Say what you will demonstrate and why.
        - Model the behavior.
        - Ask your child what they noticed.
        - Invite your child to try it.
        - Ask what they noticed with their modeling.
        - Practice together.
        - Provide specific feedback starting with strengths using *"I notice…"* statements.
- Make your thinking and emotions explicit: "*I love that you help me prep our dinner each night. It is one of my favorite times of the day because I get to spend time with you."*
- Grow confidence: *"I noticed you have been following your plan to get your backpack ready for school the night before so you don't feel rushed in the morning."*



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Learn about your child's development. Being informed about your child's developmental milestones promotes empathy and patience.
- Allow your child to try out the routine, taking responsibility for their tasks -- even when you know you could do it faster and better.
- Be sure to consider how you can create the conditions to support their success (like ensuring they wake up with enough time to complete their morning routine).
- If part of a routine is not working, talk with your child about ways to change your plan for it to work better. *"It seems to take a long time for you to decide which books to read for*

bedtime. I usually feel tired then, and it is hard to be patient while you choose. Is there something we can do to help you choose the books more quickly? Could we choose them in the morning? What do you think we should try tonight?"

- Initially, practice may require more teaching, but avoid taking over and doing it for your child.



Support Your Child's Development and Success

- Use "Show me…" statements and ask them to demonstrate tasks or the whole routine. When a child learns a new skill, they are eager to show it off!
- Recognize effort using "I notice" statements like, *"I notice how you brushed your teeth after breakfast without me asking. That's taking responsibility!"*
- On days with extra challenges that make completing routines harder, proactively remind your child to help them be successful. In a gentle, non-public way, you can whisper in your child's ear, *"Remember our next step? What is it?*"
- Actively reflect on how routines are going. You can ask questions like:
    - *"How are you feeling when it's time to get dressed? Is it working to select your clothes in the morning? Or do you need to set them out the night before?"*
    - *"It seems like you got to bed later than we hoped last night. Were you feeling tired today? Did you have a hard time paying attention in class?"*
- Apply logical consequences when needed. Logical consequences should come soon after the negative behavior and need to be provided in a way that maintains a healthy relationship. Rather than punishment, a consequence is about supporting the learning process. First, recognize your feelings and practice a calm down strategy. Not only is this good modeling, but when you control your emotions and feel calm, you can provide logical consequences that fit the behavior. Second, invite your child to discuss the expectations established in Step 2 for the routine. Third, if you feel that your child is not keeping to the agreement that was made (unless it is a matter of them not knowing how), then look for a logical consequence that has or will naturally occur to reflect on, such as a sibling's hurt feelings over mean words. Then, as you reflect, you might ask, "How can you heal your sister's hurt feelings?" Your child can think through what they might do or say to repair harm. Or you might apply a logical consequence as a teachable moment. One example of a logical consequence during a morning routine that's gone awry might be to encourage your child to apologize to their teacher for being late for school and make a plan to begin your morning routine earlier the next day.

- Be patient and avoid criticism. Children often need more time to perform challenging tasks, even if you believe they are simple and don't require much time. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they can do what you need them to do.

Trap Logical consequences should not be used as a threat to get your child to complete their routines. Threats harm the relationship with your child and decrease your child's decision-making skills.

STEP 5 RECOGNIZE — Recognize Efforts

- No matter how old your child is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- There are many ways you can reinforce your child's efforts. It is important to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors have different impacts on your child's behavior.
    - **Recognize** even small successes to promote positive behaviors and expand confidence: *"You set out your clothes and backpack last night, so you were not rushed this morning. I appreciate that!"* Recognition can include nonverbal acknowledgment such as a smile, high five, or hug.
    - **Rewards** can be helpful in certain situations by providing a concrete, timely, and positive incentive for doing a good job. A reward is determined so the child knows what to expect, like "*If you complete your nighttime routine before your bedtime, we will play a board game together before bed*" (if you XX, then I'll XX). The goal should be to help your child progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. If used too often, rewards can decrease a child's internal motivation.
    - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent is in the middle of a crisis (like in the morning when a child is having a tantrum and is going to be late for school, and a parent is going to be late for work. To avoid disaster, a parent offers to give the child their favorite granola bar if they will stop the tantrum and get in the car). While bribes can be helpful in the short term to manage stressful situations, they will not grow lasting motivation or behavior change and should be avoided.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, snuggle together after a smooth bedtime routine and listen to relaxing music. Or, in the morning, once ready for school, leave a special note of gratitude in their lunchbox.

1. Wilson, M.B. (2012). *Interactive modeling; A powerful technique for teaching children*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.

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