

Making Connections



Winter 2022



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10 Reasons a Daily Routine is Important for Your Child and How to Set One

All families need some type of routine to get things done and create a sense of security for their children. Children often fear the unknown – whether it's the broccoli on their plate – or a big life change like moving to a different house or gaining a new sibling. While change is a learning opportunity, it can also be stressful for children. Routines bring comfort and consistency to a child's life. Daily routines might include:

- The time to get ready in the morning
- Bath times, mealtimes, naptimes, and bedtimes
- Housework, cooking and cleaning schedules
- Play time, family time and outdoor play

Routines also help your child know what's important to your family. While daily routines look different across neighborhoods the most important aspect is creating a routine that works for your family.

Here are 10 reasons a daily routine is important for your child:

1. Helps your child get on a schedule - Consistent routines will help your child and their "body clocks" with many day-to-day basics such as:

- Ability to take naps and sleep well at night
- Ability to eat healthy, full meals
- Regular bowel movements
- Healthy play and outdoor time
- Calm, relaxed behavior at "down times" during the day

For example, because your child and their body know it's time to sleep, they are more easily able to wind down and rest.

2. Bonds the family together - When a child knows what to expect and notices regular family activities, they begin to understand what's important. This strengthens shared values, beliefs, and interests.

The child, for example, might notice that eating breakfast together on Saturday mornings is important. They can see that family time together is special. Even if your child is young, they will pick up on these traditions. The family bonds together by doing regular, important things together.

3. Establishes expectations - Rather than having a power struggle about picking up toys at the end of the day or taking a bath, a child becomes accustomed to knowing when "pick up time" and "bath time" are. Children begin to expect and complete activities without issue. As the parent, you become a partner in that routine, rather than the person who is telling the child to "do this" and "not do this."

4. Creates a calmer household - Because the child, and other family members, know what to expect, stress and anxiety are reduced. The child will know what comes next. They will feel valued because they are included in the plans and don't feel as if they're being forced to do something.

5. Gives your child confidence and independence - With a routine, a child will learn over time when it's time to brush their teeth or put on their pajamas. They will take pride in knowing what they are supposed to do – and doing it by themselves. Rather than always being told what needs to happen, your child will feel confident to go ahead and be in charge of themselves. When children feel empowered and independent, they are less likely to rebel or retaliate.

6. Establishes healthy, constructive habits - From brushing teeth regularly to completing homework every afternoon, routines help establish constructive habits. Children who practice these skills will be able to better manage their time. As they age, they'll have more self-discipline in terms of healthy grooming and eating habits, along with studying and cleaning their rooms.

7. Helps you (the parent) remember important things - Whether it's ensuring your child takes their medicine every day or remembering to pay the bills every month, a routine helps you stay on track.

Family life is busy and routines help you to keep track of the important details – allowing for a more stress-free household and quality time together as a family.

8. Offers your child an opportunity to get excited about what's ahead - If your child knows what's on the schedule, they anticipate and look forward to future events – such as going to the park on Friday afternoons or visit grandparents on Sunday. When these activities are established, your child feels like a loved part of the family and the world.

9. Provides opportunity for special “daily rituals” - When you build something into your day, like snuggling and reading to your child before bed, you instill special moments or “daily rituals.” These dedicated times create increased bonding and connection with your child every day. Rather than just moving from one activity to the next, you have quality, relaxing time built into each day.

10. Offers stability during times of change or stress - Changes and stresses impact a child's life and sense of security. When the family has an established a routine, consistency is present in the child's life, no matter what is going on. A child finds calmness, stability, and love through elements of routine, such as family dinners or regular Thursday trips to the library.

The Importance of Flexibility

While establishing and maintaining routine has a wealth of benefits, it's vital to also remain flexible. Spontaneity and creativity are important factors in a child's life. For example, the breakfast dishes can wait if there is an exciting animal in the backyard or a special Saturday carnival happening in the city.

Remember to stay sensitive and adaptable to the needs of each child (and adult). When a schedule becomes too regimented or strict, the benefits will be reduced, and children may feel controlled by it rather than freed by it (which is the ultimate goal).

Routines can begin from the first day of life. If you haven't started a routine from the early days, don't worry. They can be established and start at any point. The earlier you establish a routine, the better.

Step 1: Establish the important times such as mealtimes, snack times, naptimes, and bedtime.

Because these affect how well your child is able to sleep and eat, these items should come first.

If you currently have no schedule, gradually move to a consistent routine. For example, you may wish to set up a regular naptime and bedtime first. Then, you can add in regular mealtimes and bath times.

Step 2: Practice patience. Setting a schedule may be hard for your child at first, but they will become accustomed to it. Try not to become impatient or frustrated if the routine takes time to become "regular" for your child.

Step 3: Add "helpful" elements to each part of the routine. For instance, you may wish to add in a regular 10 minute reading and snuggling time with your child before bed. This helps them wind down and feel ready to sleep.

Step 4: Work toward consistency and make room for flexibility. In order for a routine to stick, you'll need to make sure you keep it as regular as possible. However, stay open to flexibility, especially for holidays and special events, so your child's mood doesn't become solely dependent on eating at a specific time, for example.

Step 5: Establish special times with your child. Whether it's a regular trip to grandma's house or walking the dog together, create expectations and routine of family time.

Step 6: Adjust as needed. As the months go on, you'll start to see what's working and not working for the family. A routine is meant to *help* the family, not hinder it. Be sure your routine is healthy and positive for your child and other family members.

If you feel you need some ideas in creating a routine that works for you and your child, talk with your WV Birth to Three team members for support!

Adapted from - Petit Early learning Journey (2017). *10 reasons a daily routine is important for your child (and how to set one)*. Retrieved from <https://www.petitjourney.com.au/10-reasons-a-daily-routine-is-important-for-your-child-and-how-to-set-one/>.



For an additional resources to establish daily routines visit the link below.

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/routines/>

QR Codes for quick connection to

Scan this QR code with your smartphone camera and go directly to the WV Birth to Three website



West Virginia

Birth to Three

Scan this QR code with your smartphone camera and go directly to the WV Birth to Three Family Resources page.



Growing Together



Social Milestones

Milestones Age 0 to 6

Positive relationships with caring adults in the first few years of life have a huge impact on the areas of the brain responsible for social development. As kids form familiar, supportive connections with caring adults, their brains are also forming connections that will help them learn to cooperate and manage their behaviors. And with these important skills, they can build strong, healthy relationships with others.

Birth to age two: From the earliest days of making eye contact with others and copying their expressions, babies' brains are making connections that help with communication, and they're learning the building blocks for developing relationships. From 3–6 months, they may try to get adults' attention by smiling and watching faces closely. As they approach age one, they may become clingy or show anxiety with new people or new situations—signs of their strong attachment.

You can:

- Show children unconditional love by hugging, holding, and comforting them.
- Physically be there to help kids feel safe and secure.

Two-year-olds' independence may begin to shine through as they become able to share their needs (“I’m hungry, Daddy.”) As they see that they can make things happen by how they communicate with you, they may make their opinion known by often saying “no”! As they near age three, children may become more interested in playing with other kids. Playing helps grow the parts of the brain that help children understand relationships, and it also helps them make connections about the world around them.

You can:

- Make sure there are lots of things to play with during play dates to avoid sharing issues.
- Encourage independence by assigning simple helping jobs, like cleaning up toys.



Three-year-olds are becoming more interested in making friends and may have an easier time separating from caregivers. With practice, developmental milestones for three-year-olds will be reached as their brains become wired to wait, which helps them be patient and “bounce back” when things don’t go their way (but only sometimes!).

You can:

- Have pretend conversations with stuffed animals to practice ways to make new friends.
- Play games such as I Spy, which help pass the time and make waiting more fun.

Four-year-olds: As they begin to understand what others are thinking and feeling, they may suggest solutions to problems, such as taking turns when two friends want to use the same toy. Children will also start figuring out creative ways to play with others (for instance, when seeing others playing with a cardboard box, she may say, “Let’s pretend we’re going to space in a space ship!”).

You can:

- Use an egg timer to help children learn turn taking.
- Play pretend with stuffed animals to model problem-solving strategies between friends.

Five- and six-year olds will still need help in social situations, but may begin to make some compromises and solve everyday conflicts by themselves! (“You can use the red marker now and I’ll use it after you.”) They may also seem to know their own needs a little better (such as feeling cold and putting on a sweat-shirt).

You can:

- Help children learn to dress themselves. Talk about the weather and what clothing is needed to be comfortable.
- Talk about how friends have similarities and differences, and that’s okay!



W • E • B • I • N • A • R

Please join West Virginia Birth to Three for a webinar, "Seizure Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorder," on January 9, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. In the session, Dr. Lindsey, a child neurologist at Ruby Memorial in Morgantown, WV will provide an overview of seizures and epilepsy for children diagnosed on the autism spectrum. This conversation will include:

- Incidence
- Description of seizure types
- Brief overview of particular seizure disorders
- Evaluation
- Treatment and management

Question and answer

Follow this link or scan the QR code to register for this free webinar:

<https://attendee.gototraining.com/r/3563667145745504001>





