



Back to School Morning Madness



School is back in session all around the state and with this change comes the return of some familiar phrases. "Can I have five more minutes please?" "I'm so tired!" "Where are my shoes?" "But I don't want cereal for breakfast!"

After a Summer of fun and frolic, returning to school in the Fall can be a time of stress and confusion, but it doesn't have to be! Here are some tips to help you streamline your morning routine to help things move quicker and smoother and get your children off with a smile.

SLEEP

Ensure that your child is getting enough quality sleep! This may sound like a no-brainer, but many underestimate the amount of sleep that young children need!

<i>Children in Nursery School</i>	<i>Age 3-4:</i>	<i>11 - 12 hours</i>
<i>Children in Elementary School</i>	<i>Age 5-10:</i>	<i>10 - 11 hours</i>
<i>Children in Middle School</i>	<i>Age 11-14:</i>	<i>9 1/4 - 10 hours</i>
<i>Children in High School</i>	<i>Age 15-18:</i>	<i>8 1/2 - 9 hours</i>



Children who aren't getting enough quality sleep can experience mood swings, have trouble concentrating, have difficulty in problem solving and have elevated stress levels.

To increase the amount and quality of the sleep your child experiences, be consistent in their bed time each night, make reading a part of the bedtime routine and precipitate bedtime with a soothing warm bath. You should also move to avoid television and video games, soda, sugary snacks and "stalling" tactics that children employ to stretch their awake time. By putting these suggestions into action, children will go to bed with less adrenaline and sugar in their systems and awaken more refreshed and ready to tackle the day.

ORGANIZE - Weekend



Try to get as much as you can out of the way weekend before. Check the weather for the week and based on the forecast, pick out complete outfits for the week with your child. Make sure that they coincide with school events (e.g. sneakers for gym day). By enlisting your child to help with wardrobe selections, they have made their preferences known ahead of time and this will eliminate those "I don't want to wear that" mornings.



Weekends can also be used to decide on breakfast options for the week. Discuss with your child what options are available (cereal, oatmeal, yogurt & fruit, etc.) and write down what they choose to have each morning - maybe write it down on the school lunch menu. Doing this ahead of time may save precious minutes in the morning rather than waiting for an indecisive child to make up their mind. Another option is to assign breakfast: Monday=cereal, Tuesday=oatmeal, etc. Choose an option that will work for your household and stick with it.



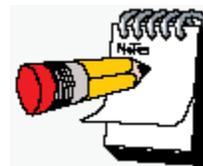
ORGANIZE-Daily

Mornings can be especially stressful with so much to accomplish in a very short amount of time. To alleviate some of the morning activities, try these suggestions:



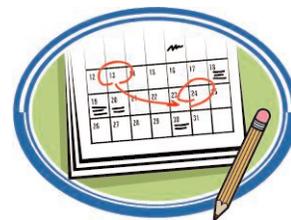
Showers or baths should take place the night before to alleviate bathroom usage in the mornings. If necessary, stagger bathroom times amongst family members and impose limits (10 minutes per person). This gives everyone the same amount of time without discussion. Use a timer, if necessary, to reinforce the time slots.

Write out a list of what needs to be done each morning and post it where the child can see it (use pictures if your child is still learning to read). For instance, a) wake up, b) get dressed, c) don't forget socks and shoes, d) wash face, e) brush teeth, f) brush hair, g) eat breakfast, h) have a great day in school! Make it colorful and fun! Make a game out of having each child finish their list. "I see you missed something on your list this morning. Can you figure out what you missed?"



Prep what you can the night before a school day: lunch money, snacks (that don't have to be refrigerated overnight), homework and notices, as well as anything needed for after school activities (swim stuff, etc.) can all be put together the night before. Designate one area where school bags are to be placed each night once they are ready.

Visual reminders can also help younger children in getting ready for school with less confusion. A color coded calendar can sometimes help alleviate that confusion of what to bring to school each day. Days with a green star could indicate library days, when books need to be returned. Days with a purple smiley face might mean 'music class - don't forget your instrument'!



When a child has some input into the daily decisions, they feel more confident about themselves and take pride in their appearance, their school work and their attendance! By putting some of these tips and tricks into place, everyone will be able to start the day off with ease and a smile!