



Avoiding Morning Madness

Getting everyone out the door in the morning can feel like we've put in a full day's work before 7 am. We have to deal with the sleepyhead, the dawdler, the procrastinator, the inappropriate dresser and the forgetful space cadet. Until we can let these characters have meaningful experiences they will continue to be difficult to get up and get going. Arranging for these meaningful experiences, though, can entail that rest of the family is thrown into uproar, as the natural consequences of certain behaviors can over-complicate our lives.

What is a parent to do?

Here are some hints to help create a peaceful morning routine.

Do what you can the night before. Planning ahead the night before can help the morning go smoother. Have children lay out the clothes they will put on in the morning. Plan breakfast menu's weekly and set the breakfast table after dinner. Have a spot for everyone's supplies—coats, shoes, backpacks, lunches—and set out what you can the night before. Make lunches the night before. Have the children learn to do whatever age appropriate tasks they can.

Have expectations. Consider no television, computer time or video games in the morning. Expect everyone to be dressed before breakfast. Expect everyone to be ready to go at a certain time and set a five or ten-minute timer to help get everyone headed in that that direction.

Get some skin in the game. Make your children responsible for certain tasks. Even a three-year-old can be expected to set the table with silverware, dishes and food, carry his or her dishes to the kitchen and place dishes into the dishwasher. If the jobs don't get done, then the children see that their contribution is important to the well-being of their family.

Create consequences. Decide what you will do when the morning routine heads down the wrong path, and tell your children what to expect as consequences. If the television is turned on before you brush your teeth, I'll turn it off. If you aren't dressed by the time to we need to get in the car, I'll put your clothes in the car and you can get dressed at school. If you haven't eaten breakfast by a certain time, I'll put your food away. Remember, whatever you say you'll do, do it without comment. Actions speak louder than words. You'll probably only have to do these things once or twice before the dawdler or procrastinator learns to change their ways. I've had several students appear at school in their pajamas after their parents talked to me about their dawdling. But usually only once.

Get enough sleep. Make sure that you, as well as the children, are well rested. Adults need on average 8 hours of sleep per night. Unfortunately, most adults get only around six hours of rest. The paradox is that when you go ahead and get that extra couple of hours of sleep, you'll find that you are more productive and alert and can get the same amount completed of tasks in less time.

Children need 10 to 14 hours of sleep per day depending on the age of the child. Have a bedtime schedule and enforce it so that all of your family members can start the day rested and ready to go.

Have a plan, have expectations, have consequences, give responsibility and get enough sleep so that your household can rise and shine.

Kids Talk™ *deals with childhood development issues. Maren Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over twenty-five years experience working with children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale. She is author of Building Cathedrals Not Walls: Essays for Parents and Teachers and Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents. Contact her at maren@kidstalknews.com or visit www.MarenSchmidt.com. Copyright 2010.*

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