

Seven Benefits of Using Routines with Your Kids

1. Routines eliminate power struggles

Routines eliminate power struggles because you aren't bossing the child around. This activity (brushing teeth, napping, turning off the TV to come to dinner) is just what we do at this time of day. The parent stops being the bad guy, and nagging is greatly reduced.

2. Routines help kids cooperate

Routines help kids cooperate by reducing stress and anxiety for everyone. We all know what comes next, we get fair warning for transitions, and no one feels pushed around, or like parents are being arbitrary.

3. Routines help kids learn to take charge of their own activities.

Over time, kids learn to brush their teeth, pack their backpacks, etc., without constant reminders. Kids love being in charge of themselves. This feeling increases their sense of mastery and competence. Kids who feel more independent and in charge of themselves have less need to rebel and be oppositional.

4. Kids learn the concept of "looking forward" to things they enjoy...

...which is an important part of making a happy accommodation with the demands of a schedule. He may want to go to the playground now, but he can learn that we always go to the playground in the afternoon, and he can look forward to it then.

5. Regular routines help kids get on a schedule

Regular routines help kids get on a schedule, so that they fall asleep more easily at night.

6. Routines help parents build in those precious connection moments.

We all know that we need to connect with our children every day, but when our focus is on moving kids through the schedule to get them to bed, we miss out on opportunities to connect. If we build little connection rituals into our routine, they become habit. Try a snuggle with each child when you first see them in the morning, or a "recognition" ritual when you're first reunited:

"I see you with those beautiful gray eyes that I love so much!" or a naming ritual as you dry him after the bath: "Let's dry your toes...your calf...your knee...your thigh....your penis....your belly ..."

Rituals like these slow you down and connect you on a visceral level with your child, and if you do them as just "part of the routine" they build security as well as connection and cooperation.

7. Schedules help parents maintain consistency in expectations.

If everything is a fight, parents end up settling: more TV, skip brushing teeth for tonight, etc. With a routine, parents are more likely to stick to healthy expectations for everyone in the family, because that's just the way we do things in our household. The result: a family with healthy habits, where everything runs more smoothly!

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