

Post #4: (Re)Discovering Routine

It goes without saying that every one of us has experienced a change in routine in the past few weeks. But what impact does this have on our children? Routines are helpful for providing structure to a child's day. It helps them to know what is coming next and how long we might be participating in a certain activity. In this post, I want to outline some strategies for (re)establishing routine to help ease the stress that many children experience when they do not know what is coming next, or when they will be switching to the next activity.

Sleep

The routine that we establish with our children should begin and end with the same thing: sleep. School aged children need nine to twelve hours of sleep each night. Sticking to a consistent bedtime and wake up time helps to keep the child's biological clock on track. Adequate sleep has many benefits including improvements to learning ability. Dr. Shanker includes inadequate restorative sleep as one of the biological stressors that can lead to stress behaviours.

Source: (South Louisiana Medical Associates. <https://www.slma.cc/the-importance-of-a-sleep-schedule/>)

Create and Communicate the schedule



Whether you create the schedule or you create it with your children, make it part of your morning to routine to go over what you will be doing and when. How your schedule looks and what you include can vary greatly – tailor it to you and your family.

On the left is a picture of a schedule I made for my daughter, Violet, who is three. We chunk our day by meal times and I post the schedule for the next chunk of time on the fridge. Violet is three but nevertheless is often the one to remind me to update our schedule, to check it and let me know what is coming next.

It is often helpful to use visuals with schedules. Visuals last longer and can help children to remember and process what they are seeing. I also use a visual timer to help my daughter see the amount of time left for an activity. One example is the “Visual Timer” app is free and available for iPhone and iPad.

(Source: Connectability. <https://connectability.ca/2010/09/23/using-visuals/>)

The picture on the right is a schedule posted by Jessica McHale Photography. I think this is a really interesting way to frame a schedule for older children. It includes a “Wake Up/Morning Walk” routine. “Academic Time” can be flexible and gives children the choice to work on literacy or numeracy or other assignments they have. “Creative Time” is also flexible, and can include a wide variety of activities.

Make sure to build activity time in to the schedule that you make, and include opportunities for children to help learn the essential life skills of managing a household such as cooking, cleaning and planning future meals.

© Jessica McHale Photography

Before 9:00am	Wake up	Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed, put PJ's in laundry
9:00-10:00	Morning walk	Family walk with the dog Yoga if it's raining
10:00-11:00	Academic time	NO ELECTRONICS Sudoku books, flash cards, study guide, Journal
11:00-12:00	Creative time	Legos, magnetiles, drawing, crafting, play music, cook or bake, etc
12:00	Lunch	
12:30PM	Chore time	A - wipe all kitchen table and chairs. B - wipe all door handles, light switches, and desk tops. C - Wipe both bathrooms - sinks and toilets
1:00-2:30	Quiet time	Reading, puzzles, nap
2:30-4:00	Academic time	ELECTRONICS OK Ipad games, Prodigy, Educational show
4:00-5:00	Afternoon fresh air	Bikes, Walk the dog, play outside
5:00-6:00	Dinner	
6:00-8:00	Free TV time	Kid showers x3
8:00	Bedtime	All kids
9:00PM	Bedtime	All kids who follow the daily schedule & don't fight

https://www.instagram.com/p/B9sJ0vvgmFG/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet

Next time we will look in to ways to create and sustain a good bedtime routine and the benefits that a restorative sleep provides. If you have any questions, comments or ideas you would like to share with other parents, please feel free to reach out to me at jharrison@isd21.mb.ca. Take care and stay well!