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## STEPS TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT DAILY ROUTINE FOR YOUR FAMILY

*by Emily Hanlon*



**D**aily routines play a crucial role in child development. From wake-up times, to bedtime routines, to meal times, play times, school time and so on. A solid routine can provide the consistency and predictability that children thrive on, and that takes the guesswork out of the day for them.

There is a reason that many children thrive in the school environment where their day is planned strategically and they know what subjects they have on in advance. These same kids may struggle in the school holidays where the routine at home may be more relaxed. This is because predictability reduces our stress response, which therefore reduces our big emotions.

So, less stress = less intense emotions = less behavioural outbursts. I don't know about you but anything that reduces a meltdown in our house is a win for me!

Each family's routine is going to look completely different, and what works for one family may not be feasible for another. And you know what? That is OK. Some families are going to have simple routines such as rough ideas for mealtimes and bedtimes, and others will have detailed routines with specific steps that kids follow.

There is no right or wrong way to create a routine for your family, as long as it works for you!

## **HERE ARE 5 STEPS FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT DAILY ROUTINE FOR YOUR FAMILY:**

### **Step 1: Assess your family's needs and priorities**

Before diving into the specifics of your daily routine, take some time to assess your family's needs and priorities. Consider factors such as work schedules, school routines, and individual preferences.

Are there specific times of day when your family is most active or in need of downtime? Is there a certain time the kids need to be in bed to ensure they get enough sleep? Is there a certain time everyone needs to be awake in order to leave for school?

By understanding your family's dynamics, you can create a routine that works for everyone.

### **Step 2: Establish consistent wake-up and bedtime routines**

A successful daily routine often comes down to consistency, particularly when it comes to morning and bedtime routines. And let's face it, we've all had a wobbly bedtime routine (hello overtired kids after a big day at school).

Establishing consistent morning and bedtime routines can help regulate children's sleep patterns and promote overall well-being. Consider incorporating calming bedtime routines such as bath time followed by quiet/reading time before bed. Or perhaps energising morning routines such as enjoying a nutritious breakfast together before the day begins.

### **Step 3: Plan balanced meals and snack times**

Routines don't only take the guesswork out of the day for kids, they can also be really beneficial for parents. If you know what you've planned for dinner, for example, you're not in a giant flap at 4pm when the kids are screaming at you as if they haven't eaten in 48 hours. Plus, nutrition plays a vital role in children's growth and development. Therefore, taking time to plan and create balanced meals, should be an essential part of your daily routine.

Aim to plan balanced meals and snack times that provide a variety of nutrients to support your family's health.

Involve children in meal preparation and offer healthy options that cater to their tastes and preferences. By establishing regular meal and snack times, you can help regulate hunger cues and promote healthy eating habits. And you know what? They don't have to be fancy, and they don't have to be elaborate. I rely on my slow cooker at least three times a week...10 minutes of prep in the morning and I have a delicious meal ready when I walk through the door in the afternoon. Don't confuse 'healthy, balanced meal' with 'complicated.'

#### **Step 4: Incorporate physical activity and play**

Regular physical activity is essential for children's physical health and cognitive development. Incorporating age-appropriate physical activities and play into your daily routine can help keep children active and engaged. Whether it's outdoor play, indoor games, or structured sports activities, find opportunities to encourage movement and exploration throughout the day. It's going to look different for each family.

#### **Step 5: Include time for play**

It sounds silly, and simple...but don't forget to make time for play! While incorporating play into the daily curriculum of toddlers and younger children is typically a priority, when children reach school age, play often comes second to more academic styles of learning. Interestingly, however, children of all ages develop cognitive, social, emotional and motor skills through the use of play.



Stimulating children's minds through learning and creative activities is equally important for their development. Play also allows your child to role-play routines and explore how it makes them feel.

By encouraging curiosity and exploration through this kind of play, you're providing opportunities for children to express themselves creatively and communicate.

Creating the right daily routine for your family is a process that requires careful consideration and flexibility. By assessing your family's needs and priorities, establishing consistent wake-up and bedtime routines, planning balanced meals and snack times, incorporating physical activity and play, and including time for learning and creative activities, you can create a routine that promotes the well-being of your entire family. But remember to embrace flexibility and be open to adjustments as your family's needs evolve over time.

So, to summarise, having a routine in place for the family is essential for both children and adults for several reasons:

- **Predictability and Stability:** A routine provides a sense of predictability and stability for everyone in the family. Knowing what to expect helps reduce anxiety and stress, especially for children who thrive on consistency. For adults, having a routine can also promote a sense of calm and control in their daily lives.
- **Time Management:** A well-established routine helps with time management, ensuring that essential tasks and activities are completed efficiently. This is especially important for busy families juggling multiple responsibilities such as work, school, extracurricular activities, and household chores. By having a routine in place, families can better manage their time and prioritize activities effectively.

- **Promotes Healthy Habits:** A routine can help reinforce healthy habits for both children and adults. For example, setting consistent meal times encourages healthier eating habits, while designated times for physical activity promote regular exercise. Additionally, incorporating bedtime routines can improve sleep quality for the entire family, leading to better overall health and well-being.
- **Enhances Family Bonding:** Establishing regular family routines creates opportunities for quality time together. Whether it's family dinners, game nights, or weekend outings, having dedicated time slots for family activities fosters stronger bonds and communication among family members. These shared experiences contribute to a sense of belonging and connectedness within the family unit.
- **Teaches Family Members About Responsibility and Independence:** Following a routine teaches children important life skills such as responsibility and independence. By having set tasks and expectations, children learn to take ownership of their actions and contribute to household responsibilities. This sense of autonomy promotes self-confidence and self-reliance as children grow older.
- **Improves Overall Well-Being & Mental Health:** Consistency and structure provided by a routine can have positive effects on mental health for both children and adults. Knowing what to expect and having a sense of control over one's environment can reduce feelings of anxiety and promote emotional well-being. Additionally, routines can help individuals cope with stress more effectively by providing a sense of stability during challenging times.



Overall, having a routine in place for the family is crucial for promoting a sense of stability, time management, healthy habits, family bonding, responsibility, independence, and mental well-being for both children and adults alike.



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