

The Value of Routines



CAREGIVERS

Busy caregivers know how exhausting a day keeping up with kids can be. Many of us are balancing our own stresses with the stresses of taking care of the people that depend on us. Although they may show it differently, kids can feel stress, too. The good news is that there are some simple things you can do to make everyone's day run a little smoother. These simple things also build a child's brain and help get them ready for important life skills.



Family Meal Time

When you can, have breakfast, lunch, and dinner together as a family. Family meals build a sense of belonging and security. Any meal that you sit down and eat together counts as a family meal—it can be cereal for dinner, or a picnic of peanut butter and jelly. Be kind to yourself: it's about family, not food. Bonus: make family meals screen-free! Tell jokes, ask kids about their day, or tell them stories about what you did when you were little.



Explain Daily Agendas

Each morning, telling a child (or adolescent!) what they can expect that day can help them to feel safe and secure. "This morning you'll go to school and see your friends. Grandma will be here when you get off the bus to play. I'll be home at dinnertime, and we'll have pizza!"



Utilize Calendars

For toddlers and elementary school age kids (kindergarten through fifth grade), hang up a weekly or monthly calendar on the fridge or somewhere easy for them to see. At the end of the day, help them cross it off. Talk about what they can look forward to that week and show them on the calendar when it will happen. Older kids and adolescents can help make their own calendar.



Bedtime Routines

Create a bedtime routine together. Doing the same things in the same order, around the same time every day gives kids a great sense of security and helps build their brains. Even very young babies love routines! A bedtime routine doesn't have to be long (it can be as short as a few minutes). You might choose to do a "BBB" routine, with "bath, books, and brushing" (teeth) every night. Cuddling up together and reading together is a great way to end the day.