



Tips to help manage hectic school mornings



If a typical school morning sees your family rushing around and out the door with nary a moment to spare, only to be left feeling like you ran a marathon by 9 a.m., a new approach to your routine might be necessary.

Mornings, especially in households in which parents who work outside of the home and have one or two kids walk-

ing, busing or needing a ride to their respective schools, can often be hectic. Starting the morning feeling harried and stressed can carry over into the mood of the day, affecting productivity as a result.

According to Dr. David Anderson, PhD, senior director of the ADHD and Disruptive Behaviour Disorders Centre at the Child Mind Institute, busy mornings can be the most stressful moments of the day. Homework hour and getting prepared for bed are other typically stressful times of the day for families.

If less stressful mornings are a goal for your family, try these strategies.

Start the night before

Doing as much preparatory work the evening before can make quite a difference in taming hectic mornings. Things that can be done in advance include checking and stocking backpacks, signing



paperwork, making lunches, setting out clothing, showering, and having breakfast foods ready to go.

Establish a 'launch pad'

Ann Dolin, an education specialist, suggests having a launch pad, or a place where all school-related items are prepped and stored. It can be a basket, box or another container big enough to contain school items. Children can drop and pick up the items as needed.

Make the routine the boss

Positive Parenting Solutions founder Amy McCreedy says families can implement a "when-then" routine that sets the tone for the morning. "When everyone is dressed, hair combed, breakfast eaten, and school supplies packed, then you can watch 10 minutes of an educational cartoon." This puts the routine in control rather than making the parents the bad guys.



Make kids responsible

Too often parents add more stress to their plates by showing up at school with forgotten lunch boxes or band instruments. Instead, parents can stop rescuing their children and help train them to be more responsible - an essential trait.

Chart wake-up times

It may seem like micromanaging, but scheduling wake-up and bathroom times can help everyone know where they should be and when they should be there. It also helps avoid bottleneck situations in the bathroom or kitchen.

Keep morning madness to a minimum with some simple strategies. (MCC)



Slow Down. Watch for kids. Be prepared to STOP.



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