

Counselor's Corner

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Rituals and Routines

Children find comfort in daily routines, whether it's their morning routine, mealtime, or getting ready for bed. Routines help them to know just what to expect on a daily basis. Sticking to routines helps parents deal with fewer battles at all times of the day.

- *Morning moments* – For younger children, developing a special “getting-ready” routine and sticking with it is the key to happy mornings. When children can predict what's coming next, they feel competent and are much more likely to cooperate. One example of a morning routine would include: wake up with a snuggle, get dressed, make your bed, eat breakfast, brush your teeth & comb your hair, and finally gather everything for school. When choices are allowed within this routine it can also help, such as asking the child “Would you like to put on your shirt or pants first? Or would you like toast or cereal for breakfast?”
- *Bedtime rituals* – Parents should help make the routine for bedtime leisurely. Rushing a child can make him/her feel unimportant to the parent. Evening time should be arranged to include quiet time together with a snack, storybook reading, a bath or shower, and some snuggling. This total routine should last approximately 30-45 minutes. Giving your child a warning about 15 minutes before starting their bedtime routine lets them begin to prepare mentally. Prior to starting the bedtime routine, it's a good idea to make sure everything needed is packed in their backpack for the next morning, and that they have clothing picked out for school to make dressing as complaint free as possible! Parents need to encourage independence by allowing students to take care of these responsibilities while they just check to make sure the choices are acceptable.