

Back to School Routine

Families are busy! Even more so now that school is in session and managing that never ending list of things to do can seem daunting. After looking into a variety of different suggestions, it really comes down to organization.

The first and most important tool is a planner. Planners have been around for a good deal of time and it truly is the best way to keep track of all the busy activities of each member of the family. There are lots of creative ways to display the family schedule, just check out those popular social media sites.

Now that there is a planner or calendar posted for the entire family to see, it is important to schedule in a family night. This is something that needs to be somewhere on the schedule each week. It can seem impossible after looking at each member's schedule, but spending time as a family is a must.

Another important thing to plan and keep in the planner or on the calendar is meals. With the meals decided each week, the shopping list is prepared and that can make the time spent at the grocery store a lot less. Not to mention if grocery shopping is spent with the family. Meal planning is a great thing to do as a family and saves a great deal of time.

Keeping with saving time, is dealing with all of the different piles that can form at the entry way. It is so easy, especially for kids to be so excited to be home that they just take a step inside the door and to the floor goes the backpack, maybe a jacket with the cooler mornings, important notes, and other items from their day at school. And there is the potential for any practice gear they may have. The best tip for this is to designate a drop spot. This can be a series of hooks placed on the wall right by the door for those jackets and backpacks. It could also be a great place for hanging organizers for important papers or mail.

If after implementing these time saving tips, it still seems like there is not enough time in the day, it might be important to review whether or not the family is overscheduled. Organized activities can help children gain skills and self-confidence, but too much structured activity can contribute to anxiety, stress, and depression in children and cause kids to become self-critical perfectionists, reports a 2006 study by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"You don't get to know each other because there's not time to just really be," says family psychologist Kathleen Kendall-Tackett. "You're just interacting between activities." Ask yourself these questions to help determine whether your family is overscheduled:

- Do your children enjoy their extracurricular activities? Do you enjoy them?
- What does the activity accomplish?
- Is it being done out of habit?
- Do you feel like your kids need to be in activities because everyone else is, too?
- Do your kids spend so much time in activities that you don't know what else is going on in their lives?

Ideally, this article will spark an immediate change and get the family on track. However, even with the best of intentions, changing the family dynamic takes time. Don't expect to meet every goal right off the bat, especially regarding home organization.

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