

The Anne Arundel County Tot's Line

NEWSFLASH



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Importance of Routines:

Did you know that children thrive on routine and structure? Did you know that research has shown children living in families who maintain regular family routines have fewer and shorter respiratory infections? According to the Raising Children Network, “there is still some question about why. It might be that the routines contribute to healthy habits like washing hands which prevent transmission of germs that can cause illness, or that they help protect children against the kind of stress that suppress the immune system.”

Did you know that research also shows that children behave better and have better school performance when their family has a routine in place. Children crave routine. Children like repetition. **Routines help children feel safe, secure, and in control.** Children like to know what to expect.

There are many benefits to routines. Routines help parents maintain consistency in expectations which eliminates the power struggles between parents and children. When children know what is expected of them, they are more likely to cooperate. With a routine, kids learn to take charge of their own activities and the concept of looking forward to things. Routines help children set their body clock. A bedtime routine will help the child’s body know when its time for sleeping. Routines teach children to be healthy.

Tips to keep in mind when establishing a routine:

1. **Be organized as much as possible.**
2. **Be realistic. Keep in mind the child’s age.**
3. **Keep in mind child’s temperament.** An easy going child may go with the flow, and quickly adapt to a changing environment. Other children may be more upset and unsettled by changes.
4. **Get input from your significant other.** Work together when establishing a new routine.
5. **Structure your routine with your family in mind.** What is too restrictive for one family, may be just right for another family.

6. **Make a list of what you want to change and talk to family members about the changes.**
7. **When implementing a new routine, talk family members through each step.** The repetition of hearing the steps will help them remember what step comes next.
8. **Keep it simple.**
9. **Plan regular mealtimes.**
10. **Have snacks with you at all times.** In case something happens and you are not able to have lunch or dinner at the exact time, it will not be a major ordeal because your children will have something to snack on.
11. **Be consistent.**
12. **Allow for flexibility.** Kids by nature are unpredictable. Just when parents think they have a handle on their children, their children are likely to stir up the pot.
13. **Write the routine down.** Children benefit from being able to see it. Pictures are wonderful.
14. **Schedule play groups and errands when your child is alert.**
15. **Wind down before bed.** Bedtime routine is extremely important and also helps children sleep through the night.

As much as possible, once a routine is established, maintain that routine on weekends, holidays, and vacations. If schedules are unpredictable during these times, a child may exhibit inappropriate behavior.



While routines are very important, it is also important not to overschedule a child. Remember to keep play an important part of the child's routine. Through play children engage in activities that enhance their physical, language, social, and cognitive development. Stay tuned for October's Newsflash focusing on play.

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