

Creating Routines



Children are able to control themselves best when they know what to expect. Think about how you feel when you miss your morning cup of coffee or when something you expected does not happen. You may be disappointed, irritable, or disorganized. Your child may feel the same way.

Begin by creating a bedtime routine.

- Your child should go to bed at the same time every night.
 - Most Preschool aged children need about 10-12 hours of sleep each night.
- Start getting your child prepared to sleep at least an hour before bedtime.
 - Avoid exciting activities, videogames, or television.
 - Choose a routine that you can stick to.
 - Ideas for relaxing before bed include: a warm bath, a book, and/or a snuggle.
- Give your child your full attention.
 - Don't take phone calls.
- Think about things that interfere with your routine.
 - Do you sometimes work nights? Let the person who will be home with your child know about the routine and encourage them to follow it.
- Help children feel safe.
 - If your child is scared to sleep alone, leave a night light, hang a dream-catcher, check under beds or in closets, rub on "no-monster" lotion, etc.
- Allow your child to read or listen to quiet music after you leave the room.

Other routines that will help your child maintain positive behavior:

- **Mornings** – mornings can feel very hectic for many families. Try getting up just 15 minutes earlier. A morning routine that suits your family will make the process run more smoothly and get everyone off to a good start.
- **Mealtimes** – regular meal times provide physical nourishment and consistent energy levels. Meals with family members provide a sense of community and love.
- **Play** – play is the way children learn and express themselves. Play with your child every day. You will learn a lot about your child.
- **Chores** – chores increase a child's feelings of connection and contribution to his/her family. Even very young children can have daily chores with reminders and help. Some ideas include: picking up toys, setting the table for meals, filling a pet's water dish.