

January Newsletter

K.I.D.S. Therapy

Enhancing Communication and Self-Regulation Through Daily Routines

Contributing Therapists: Emily Tolstad, M.A., CCC-SLP, Nicole Naucler, M.A., CCC-SLP,
Lauren Leipper, M.A., OTR, Melissa Dietrich, MOT, OTR/L

Now that the holiday season is over, it's time to get back to your family's daily routine! This month's newsletter focuses on ways to start your family's new year off on the right track. We discuss the benefits of daily routines and provide ideas about how to easily and effectively implement daily routines into your child's life.

ROUTINES

Establishing routines at an early age can help your child prepare for future success. Children crave routine and structure. Routines are repetitive, predictable, and stable, and often eliminate power struggles because the rules and expectations are clear and predictable. Some routines might be: morning routines, naptime, snack time, setting the table, story time, bedtime routines and holiday traditions. Setting up routines at home will help prepare your child for routines at daycare or school. Implementing daily routines is especially important for children who struggle with emotional and sensory regulation. Remember that it is the parent's responsibility to set up the routine and the key to success is **CONSISTENCY!!!**

Routines Provide:

- A concept of "looking forward" and an understanding of what to expect
- A sense of comfort, calmness, and safety
- Reduced stress, anxiety, and apprehension, which will likely decrease behavior problems
- Increased self-regulation in times of sensory difficulties (e.g., sensitivity to sound, over stimulation and increased level of alertness in crowded environments, sensitivity to bright lights, etc.)
- Improved language and vocabulary skills through repetition
- Increased ability to work in an organized fashion
- Improved ability to learn and keep healthy habits
- Increased cooperation (decreased behaviors)
- Increased responsibility and independence
- Increased self-esteem: Allows the child to feel good about completing the task
- Increased ability to tolerate aspects of daily life that are not preferred, such as brushing teeth, because the process is understood.

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Inside this issue:

Importance of Daily Routines



Tips for implementing and reinforcing daily routines in a fun, positive way

Reminders:

Do you have new insurance? Please update the front desk if your plan has changed.

- **Happy New Year!**



Tips for Incorporating and Reinforcing Routines

Use Pictures: Pictures are motivating and a great way to convey expectations for children that are too young to read or have difficulty with reading. Add pictures, images, or written words to support learning new routines. You can use real life photos of your child completing each step or use icons found online. Help your child become more independent by creating a visual schedule that they can follow by themselves, following initial support.

Reward System: Establish a reward system to help support daily routines. Your child can earn points or a sticker when they complete the whole routine or a task within the routine. Choose a reward that is highly motivating to your child. Clearly define the expectation and reward with your child. Older children can generate their own list of rewards with parent approval. Incorporate a reward column into the routine schedule. Initially, provide rewards for small tasks and make sure the reward is given immediately. Gradually increase the number of tasks that need to be completed before earning a point or sticker. Remember, rewards do not have to cost anything and could be something as easy as picking what's for dinner, a trip to the playground, or extra time to play. The best rewards are those that build positive relationships and self-motivation.

Give Choices: Children do not have a lot of control of their world, which often results in power struggles and behavior issues. Allowing choices, when appropriate, is a great way to alleviate or reduce this. For example, while they are not able to control what time they eat breakfast or go to bed in their schedule, they can be allowed to choose what they eat or what pajamas they wish to wear.

Make it Fun: Add songs to routines. Anything you and your child do together can be turned into a fun interaction. Show your child lots of positive praise and facial expressions.

Another example of giving choices is mixing up the routine's order. Give your child a list of things that have to be done before they go to bed, but allow them to choose the order. This can be accomplished using Velcro and removable laminated icons or words. It's an opportunity for you and your child to be fun and silly, while accomplishing the goal of "bedtime." Just make sure you keep the items/tasks consistent. DO NOT offer choices in situations where your child has to follow your rules.

REMEMBER to give praise for what your child does correctly. (For example, "I like the way you brushed your teeth and got ready for bed without me asking you to.")

Verbal Planning/Recollection: Discuss with your child what you will do for the day or for a particular activity. Then, discuss what happened over the course of the day or in a specific activity. This helps build word knowledge, grammar, sequencing, and storytelling. When working with kids who are developing language, keep your sentences short and stress key words. Speak slowly and clearly. Use vocabulary such as "first, next, last," etc. Avoid giving too many directions in one routine and don't give directions if your child no longer needs them. The ultimate goal is to promote independence!

Be Consistent: Decide what label you're going to give a routine and stick to those names. Start and end with the same action every time. Keep a given routine the same each time and repeat it often with different people in different places. Keep the routine consistent until your child can follow it without your help, then introduce something new to expand. Printing the name of the routine on top of the picture schedule may remind you to be consistent.

Useful websites and blogs:

Pre-made Visual Schedules:
<http://childhood101.com/2011/11/literacy-spot-45-visual-schedules/>

Got PECS?
<http://373virtualpta.wordpress.com/2008/04/28/got-pecs-great-links-to-websites-with-free-pecs/>

Visual Schedule "How To":
<http://aplacetosew.blbl.orgsp.com/2012/01/morning-and-after-school-routine-cards.html>

More about Visual Supports!
<http://pinterest.com/pediastaff/visual-supports-scheds-pecs/>



Website:
www.kidstherapyassociates.com

Address:
11838 Bernardo Plaza Court,
Suite 110,
San Diego, CA 92128

Telephone
858-673-KIDS (5437)

