

The Secret of the Schedule

By

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Q. Is there any way to make life with 2 young children run more smoothly?

A. Yes, set up a daily schedule and keep to it as much as possible.

A schedule provides structure. “When structure speaks, children listen.” By providing a simple daily schedule, you help your child to feel secure. It provides consistency. It is the beginning of the discipline process. Amid all the chaos of today’s life, you will be able to accomplish as much as possible by following a routine. Here are some helpful guidelines.

Play

Play is a child’s work, and toys are the tools. Try to schedule a daily play time for you and your child. When you set aside time to enjoy play activities, you show that you value play and your time together. Open-ended play with items like Playdoh, crayons, craft materials, bubbles, blocks, building sets and other non-structured materials are ideal. Playing ball, circle games, and other activities that require moving around or running provide a natural way for your child to get exercise. The more you join in, the richer the experience is for your child.

Eating

Food should be a part of a daily meal and snack schedule. It is for eating at specified intervals at a table and preferably with others. Try to keep to those intervals and avoid whenever possible offering food in the car, in a stroller, or while your child is playing, walking, or even standing. A regular eating time fosters positive nutrition and family bonding. In addition, it decreases overeating because the next meal or snack is soon to come. Remember that food is not a toy or a reward. It is part of dining and sharing time with others.

Telephone

You can even schedule telephone time. Busy people recommend phone hours. It could be as much as all day until dinner to as little as one hour in the morning, one at noon, and a couple later in the day. Many parents do not answer the telephone when they are with their children, during and after dinner, or while at home with their family. Most important is to have a system in place that works for you. Continue to use good telephone judgment when you are with all members of your family and with your friends.

Sleep

Set up a sleep schedule for your child that includes a regular bedtime and, if possible, having your child wake up naturally in the morning. For young children, set up a regular nap time, and try to have it at home as much as possible. If your child dozes off in the car or stroller from time to time, that is okay; but it is best not to have it happen on a regular basis. In addition, try to have a fixed routine leading up to bedtime. A bath, brushing the teeth, story time, reviewing the day, preparing for the new one, and soft

music are all suggested activities. Try to set aside enough time for this routine so that you can enjoy each part of it without rushing.

As you can see, the schedule is powerful. While you may not be able to follow it strictly, you can have it as a guide, a way to help you keep up with all that needs to be done. “Going with the flow” and following natural flexibility should enhance but not replace its practicality and effectiveness.

Create a schedule. Use it, enjoy it, and... “Don’t leave home without it!”



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