



First Steps

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Managing Morning Madness

Our children do not come with instructions. Parents Reaching Out provides resources that help families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. We thank the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc. for permitting us to share their *Thoughts for Tots* in this information series.

“I’m too tired!” “I don’t know what to wear!” “He said...!” “She said...!” “What’s for breakfast?” “We’re going to be late!” Sound familiar? Getting everyone up, ready and on their way to school can prove to be quite a chore. Morning can definitely be a RUSH, RUSH, RUSH!

By using some of the following strategies, you can cut down on the morning rush and improve the likelihood of having a good day. Source: Lisa Stewart PEN Outreach Parent Liaison

Getting the kids up and going

- A regular bedtime schedule can help children get up easier in the morning. As they get older, their bedtime can be adjusted accordingly.
- Use a timer to help give children (especially younger children) a sense of how much time each morning activity should take. Example: getting out of bed, getting dressed, brushing teeth, and eating breakfast.
- To help children be responsible for their own wake-up schedule, get each child his or her own alarm clock.



Deciding what to wear

- At bedtime, help your children pick out what they want to wear the next day.
- Lay out all clothing (including socks and underwear) where the child can easily find them in the morning.
- Choose a color scheme for each day of the week, with Friday being the “anything goes” day.
- Buy outfits in sets so children can easily find matching pants and shirts.
- If your child is especially fond of a certain color, get mix and match clothing in that color.
- Buy special hangers that allow pants and shirts to be hung together as a complete outfit.



He said...! She said...!

- Set a specific breakfast time for the family and other specific routines to prevent arguing.
- Set the mood with relaxing music.
- Vary waking times to avoid a “rush” on the bathroom and to allow a minute or two of undivided attention for each child.
- Make a time chart for bathroom use for each person. This can help reduce bathroom bickering.
- Awaken older children first so they are ready earlier and can help with breakfast chores.
- Assign each child a simple task to help with the breakfast routine. For example, one child can set the plates on the table; another can set the silverware, etc.

What's for breakfast?

- Keep breakfast simple. This may not be the time to prepare an elaborate meal.
- Limit the choices.
- On the weekend, let your children help decide what should be on the week's breakfast menus. For example, oatmeal on Monday, pancakes on Tuesday, cold cereal on Wednesday, etc.)
- Take your children shopping with you to purchase the menu items.



Getting to school and work on time

- Keep the TV off.
- Keep a box of necessary items by the door or in the car (mittens, gloves, hats, backpacks, etc.)
- Keep a family calendar with special events and schedules on it.



Helping your child succeed in the mornings

All of the strategies in the world won't help unless your child learns to take responsibility. Children need to have routines set in place so they will have some structure. After that, it is their responsibility for getting themselves ready. You should help them by checking the routine periodically and making sure it is still working and is appropriate for the child's age.

For more information call Parents Reaching Out. We offer phone consultations and provide workshops in English or Spanish to communities throughout New Mexico. This publication was developed under a grant from the New Mexico Department of Health Family Infant Toddler program. However, the views here expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Health and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the New Mexico Department of Health.