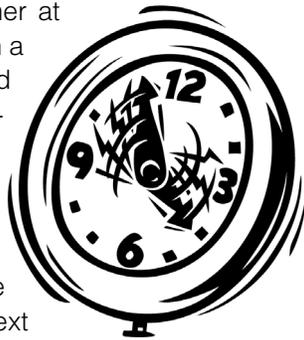


Daily Racing Against the Clock: Families Who Do Too Much

With the days of summer at our backs we are faced with a new school year and we find ourselves already overwhelmed. You've got lunches to make, kids to drop off, kids to pick up, practices to go to, and baths to take – will you make it to tomorrow, much less next summer?



Most likely each person in your family feels the stress of beginning a new routine. Because of many changes and being so busy, there is little time to check in with family members to see how they are doing. Think about each person in your family – do some deal with change different than others? Who is the most flexible and seems ok with changes? Who is the most rigid or structured and really needs change to happen slowly? It is likely each person copes differently.

Chaos is the name of the game and you and your family members are the players trying to catch a win. Will you each participate in your own separate games or will you unite as a team to assure the defeat? As a team you will need some skills that each member must work hard to supply.

What's Inside:

Keys to Listening	2
Make Going to School a Positive Experience	3
Tips for Reading with Children	4

Some Family Skills to Combat Chaos

1. *Talk about changes before they happen* – Family members will all benefit from being able to expect change. Talking beforehand allows members to possibly make a plan to prevent over-involvement and separateness in the family. It also allows people to discuss their feelings about upcoming changes.
2. *Plan some quality time at the beginning of each week* – Any time with your child or with the whole family can be made into quality time; but time set aside and uninterrupted is without a doubt QUALITY. Kids will be less harmed by an over-involved lifestyle if they have structured times each week with their family or parents where they are reminded they are loved, protected, and special.
3. *Family Business Meetings* – Have a short time each week where all are informed of the week's activities. Again, this allows everyone to know what is happening when, so that change is not so sudden. This is also a good time for members to discuss how they are doing – are they feeling worn out? Burdened? Over-worked? Over-involved? Let each person's feelings be heard by all members. If something needs to be done to help the tired feelings, then all members are present to work together. Does someone need more quality time? Should an activity be cut out? Does someone feel left out of all that is going on throughout the week?

The family team has to choose not to be defeated otherwise it can feel hopeless. Over-involvement outside the home is lack of involvement in the areas that truly count.

Keys to Listening

There is not usually enough time to talk about things between parents and children. We get so busy we don't communicate with our children. We take them to school and pick them up but do not discuss what happened while they were there. Remembering to ask questions about their lives is sometimes hard. Asking questions and listening are great investments in your children.

There are many good things that come from your children knowing that you listen and that you are interested in what they say.



- By listening you are telling them they are worth your time, and that they are important enough for you to stop what you are doing.
- When they see that mom or dad find what they say is important, they begin to feel good about themselves. They see that they have value and that they have people who care about them.
- If you listen while your child talks they know they can come to you with something important or worrisome. Talking to you will become a habit if it is a positive experience. If they regularly feel tuned out, those important issues are more likely to go unsaid.
- When your child realizes how much you listen to them they will listen to you. They will realize they like it when they get your full attention; and they will model this when it's their turn to listen.

Listening takes patience and practice!

Listening to children talk is sometimes hard, because their thoughts are unclear and the process of getting things said is slow. Words may be hard for them to find or fit into sentences.

Tips & skills for listening to your child

1. Let children finish their thoughts rather than finish for them. Letting them think and speak in their own way is important in the listening process.
2. Clarify what they are saying and make sure you understand them right. When you are in a conversation, and your child says several things, you could say, "Let me just make sure I'm following you, you are saying that....." or "So you think that..."
3. Hold your opinion during this time; just make sure you are hearing them correctly.
4. Remind yourself not to interrupt your child. Interrupting causes the conversation to get mixed up and your child usually hasn't said all they need to.
5. If your child wants to talk, or needs you to listen, and it is not a good time for you, ask them to give you a couple of minutes. Say "I really want to listen to what you are going to say, so give me three minutes to finish this up and we can talk about what you want" or, negotiate with your child a better time, if needed, and follow through.

Listening is not anything to take lightly. Kids who know they are being heard are kids who will be much more willing to talk. And when kids are willing to talk, they are more likely to talk to YOU about the hidden things they don't tell many others.



Make Going to School a Positive Experience



Starting school is a major event for children and parents and can be both fun and stressful. Many children show some anxiety about school. That's especially true when a child first attends at the beginning of each new school year or when he or she has entered a new school. A child who has been in day care may be more comfortable with the daily ritual when they enter pre-school or kindergarten.

A child's own preparation and their parents' feelings and attitudes influence how they adjust to school. There are several things parents can do to help their child:

- Show interest and be supportive and encouraging.
- Talk about what to expect like the activities, schedule, toys, and other children.
- Let your child know it's normal to feel nervous or worried about being away from parents and suggest that he or she take a familiar object or a family picture to school.
- Getting on the bus with a favorite playmate, carpooling with a friend, or identifying a buddy at school can ease the daily transition from home to school.

- Make getting ready for school as stress-free as possible. For example, have the child help lay out supplies and clothes, or make lunch the night before. Set aside some time each evening for reviewing your child's papers from school. Establishing a regular evening routine helps make bedtime easier.
- Begin each day with breakfast. Studies have shown that students who start the day with a nutritious breakfast make better grades, concentrate better, and make fewer mistakes than non-breakfast eaters. Your school may offer a free or reduced-cost breakfast program.



If your child has specific worries about school, it is helpful to be reassuring and responsive to his or her concerns. It often helps to admit that you were fearful of something at school as a child and that many children have similar worries. Some children may show regression in some behaviors, such as clinginess, sleep difficulties, thumb sucking, bed wetting, and a reluctance to go back to school. These behaviors should be temporary and will be helped by your continuing encouragement and positive expectations.

For some children the beginning school may be a little bumpy. Change is exciting, but it can be scary, too. With your understanding, patience, and sometimes a gentle nudge, your child should have an exciting and rewarding school experience.

Tips for Reading With Children



1. Read With Your Child Every Day

- Read with your child for at least 20 minutes every day.
- Give children your full attention when you are reading together.

2. Read for Enjoyment

- Let children choose the books they are interested in.
- Let children touch the books, turn the pages and discover the pictures.
- Let children read to you. Or read aloud to the children.

3. Stop Reading When Your Child Loses Interest.

- Short sessions are effective. You should not make your children read books they dislike.
- Re-read the child's favorites. Young children often want the same story read over and over again.

4. Be Expressive

- Enthusiasm is important. Give different voices to different characters.
- Use drama and excitement to make the story come alive.

5. Get to Know the Book

- Give children time to comment on what they see and hear. Ask about numbers and shapes.

- Relate the story to your children's experiences. Share opinions.

6. Visit Your Local Library

- Go often. Borrow and read many different kinds of children's books to discover and increase your child's interests. Also, don't forget that your library's computer provides the perfect opportunity to introduce your children to the Internet. Go on-line with them and show them how to do research for school projects and papers.
- Borrow a good selection of beautiful, expensive books. Children deserve the best!

7. Be a Role Model

- Children learn from example. If they see parents reading they will also want to read!

Source: Oklahoma Literacy Resource Office, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, <http://www.odl.state.ok.us/literacy/index.htm>

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This and other resources are available at:
www.fcs.okstate.edu

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