



Teaching Children Time Management Skills: Pathway to Less Stress, More Success

Are your children (and you!) struggling to stay on top of homework, get enough sleep, eat healthy, relaxed meals and find time for a little fun? Maybe the underlying problem is time management! But beyond the preschool years, parents really can't manage their kids' time; instead they need to help kids build those important skills for themselves – skills that will last a lifetime. Here are tips on how to do that!

I. Underlying issues

- Children are very “here and now” and need help to look at the big picture
- Children benefit from mindfulness about how the way they feel. It is often a consequence of choices they have made. For example, if they feel tired and grouchy in the morning, they may need to set an earlier bedtime. If they are stressed about cramming for a test, they may need a plan for studying in smaller blocks of time over several days.
- People of all ages often are unrealistic about how long things take, so monitoring specific tasks can be a good reality check (e.g. how long it takes to get ready in the morning, how long it takes to write a 5-page paper or master the spelling list)

II. Tips for parents

- Engage your child in assessing and planning
Even young elementary-age children can figure out how to manage their time if you give them a chance. Have them problem-solve about how to simplify their morning routine, where and when to do homework most effectively, and how to build in time for relaxed mealtimes and a calm bedtime routine.
- Consider bedtimes and waking times
Reasonable bedtimes and waking times are often the foundation of good time management. Figure out how much time it really takes for your child to get ready and out the door in the morning, remembering to allow for a relaxed, healthy breakfast. Tune into how your child feels at wake-up time and adjust bedtime until your child feels rested and alert upon waking.
- Create a master calendar for the week
Include special events and after-school activities, as well as school deadlines and tests. Then mark blocks of time for the necessary homework and study, plus time for fun – including outdoor play, which is both relaxing and energizing and can improve concentration.
- Prioritize and reduce commitments as needed
If the calendar is so full that there's no time for a healthy, balanced life, engage your child in prioritizing activities, eliminating some optional activities as necessary.

- Once a week, ask together “How’s it working?”
Sunday evening can be a great time to sit down with a favorite snack and reflect together on the past week and plan for the next. Help your child focus on how he or she is feeling at different times of each day. What is working well and what isn’t? What does your child need from you in order to manage time well in the coming week? How can you help create a home environment that makes it easy for your child to focus on tasks and follow a healthy, reasonable schedule?

Marti Erickson, Ph.D.
Owner & Co-host, Mom Enough®
Copyright 2015