

Establish routines to ease back into school schedule

It's back-to-school time. I think I dread it more than the kids do because it's always such a struggle to get them back into a routine after summer break. What can I do differently this year to help things go more smoothly?

It's all in the routine.

And the more quickly you establish that routine at the beginning of the school year, the more it will pay off.

Although they might complain about adhering to a new day-to-day routine at first, young people need such structure. If they know what's next on their daily schedule, it helps them feel more secure and well-rested. Being organized is even more important if your children have after-school or evening activities. Making lists and finding ways to get chores, homework and everything else done will help the whole family in the short term, and will help them in the long term to develop time-management skills.

So, as school begins, figure out what your routines will be. After school or after dinner, you might want to first have some quiet reading or homework time. Then have the kids set aside clothes for the the next day and be sure their backpacks are ready and by the door. Then, help them prepare lunches and store them in the refrigerator, or look at the cafeteria menu and help them decide what they will buy — and be sure they have enough lunch money.

In the morning, your children's routine should always include breakfast, whether at



home or at school. Your kids may think they're not hungry, but if they don't eat they'll regret it an hour later. Research supports claims that children who eat breakfast feel better and tend to learn and behave better in the hours before lunch than those who don't eat breakfast. Ideally, a breakfast should include a protein, a grain and a fruit.

After about two weeks of sticking to the new daily schedule, it should become a habit. But if something just isn't working, be sure to talk about it. You might want to debrief every once in a while — maybe even once a day — and ask the kids what's going smoothly for them about the new daily routine and what needs to change.

Finally, as a parent you need to remember that if you want your children to have a positive attitude about the school year, you're going to have to have one, too. So, try to shake off that dread you're feeling. If you're feeling anxious or negative about anything school-related, they will likely pick up on it. So, try to be excited for your kids and the new school year they're facing. Ask them what they like about school so far, and find out what they're most interested in doing during the school year. Help spark an attitude of curiosity and creativity in your kids, and they'll be better off for it.

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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Dear Subscriber: This column was reviewed by Melinda Hill, family and consumer sciences educator for Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

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