

Getting Ready on Time

Getting ready on time is perhaps one of the biggest problems parents face pre-9am. Unfortunately, human beings have decided it necessary to schedule everything around a circular object with twelve numbers on it, thus making us the only living things in this universe that think time a necessity. This essential object has therefore created hurdles by way of our genetic design. As adults we can read clocks and feel the pressure of our boss's stare when we walk through the door after starting time. Children, however, feel no such pressure. To them, there is an infinite amount of time to move from a to b and explore c to d. The consequence of this mismatched perception is stress for the parent.

Lessening the pain

While there is no quick and permanent fix to getting children out of the house on time, there are a few tricks that can be employed to make it a little easier. Routines are one of the first strategies that should be examined when dealing with house departure woes. Routines should not only flow but also match the child's capabilities. Essentially, this means that adults need to consider children's capabilities like them being able to dress themselves as well as their capability in finding the necessary levels of motivation to move towards the adult's desired deadline. If children aren't motivated to move towards something then there is every likelihood that they will appear to be going backwards. A simple mash up of the routine that gets children looking forward to something can often work wonders. An example of this suggestion would be to place something that the child considers fun or enjoyable at the end of the routine, like playing with their toys after they're bathed, dressed, fed and packed.

Knowing each child's quirks

Children's individuality sets them apart from their siblings, cousins and friend's children. For this reason adults tend to find greater success when they understand what intrinsically motivates their child. For some children it is the idea of togetherness, others it is talking, others it is independence and others it can be fun. Knowing which factor motivates the child can mean that routines can be altered to allow for more of the things children like to help them enjoy the idea of getting ready and leaving on time, for example, a child that values togetherness is unlikely to want to get dressed in the confines of their home but might willingly comply if it's done in the company of someone else. Likewise, the fun-loving child will approach the routine with greater gusto if getting ready becomes a game or competition.

Packing away and getting up to get out

One of the biggest challenges to get out the door can occur when children are knee deep in doing something much more fun than going to school or kindy. In these instances adults need a little extra grit, a good sprinkling of patience and a lot of cunning wit. Children understand that they have to get going, but they don't always understand the reasons why – even if we go blue in the face trying to explain it to them. The key to this whole article is based in the understanding that the adult must find motivators that drive children to act. In cases where the child refuses to let go of their "one more minute" plea, adults must employ a motivator. The best types of motivators involve a choice. Choices are made up of two parts and always contain a good cop bad cop type of attitude. For example, "Would you like to pack away now or leave it here and play with it when you get home?" The premise of this strategy is based in the understanding that regardless of the choice the child has to comply. The motivating factor is that one choice sounds more appealing than another.

Summing it up

While there are many other ways to get children out the door and into the car on time, a few have been discussed in this article. Firstly, adapting routines can have a big impact. Ensuring there is a motivating factor at the end of a routine can help children get ready and out of the house in time. Secondly, understanding what makes children tick can help adults establish if their strategies and ideas to get the child ready matches the child's preferred way of being. When strategies don't match children's personalities they will likely buck the helpfulness trend and resist every effort adults make. Finally, the idea of playing good cop, bad cop has been discussed. Providing the adult is able to present a choice that allows the child to see one choice is better than the other, children will more likely feel motivated to act in a helpful way.

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