

Starting the School Year off on the Right Foot

For many families the beginning of the school year means that hectic mornings will resume, the hassles of homework will begin and time together as a family will be even more difficult to find. Are there strategies parents can adopt to ease the transition and minimize the stress? Beverly Bachel, author of the book for teens entitled *What Do You Really Want?* offers practical tips for a smooth transition.

Stop the Morning Madness!

School mornings are a blur of disorganized activity for many families. Smooth things out by:

- 🔔 **Starting the day at night.** Doing as much as possible the night before can work wonders. Lay out clothes, pack lunches, gather homework and even set the breakfast table.
- 🔔 **Getting up 10 minutes earlier.** A cushion of only 10 minutes can help keep the crew on schedule.
- 🔔 **Setting a timer.** Use a kitchen timer to help children track the time they can spend in morning tasks, such as getting dressed and eating breakfast.
- 🔔 **Using a to-do list.** Brainstorm with your children on ideas for creating routines. Then incorporate those ideas into an activity checklist to use each morning.

Turning Homework into Joy

Okay, maybe not! But poor homework habits can lead to disappointing grades. This cycle can have negative consequences for your children such as low self-esteem, depression and behavior problems. Help your children keep up with homework by:

- 🔔 **Establishing a routine.** Help determine a set time and place for doing homework. Encourage your children to tackle the toughest assignments first while the brain cells are still fresh.
- 🔔 **Using a timer.** Set a watch alarm for a reasonable period of time, for example, 45 minutes. Your children may be surprised at how much can be accomplished in a focused period of time. If not finished, encourage them to stretch a bit and then finish up feeling refreshed.
- 🔔 **Providing rewards or consequences.** When a homework goal is reached, prepare a favorite dinner; give a shoulder rub; or whatever incentives



motivate your child. Or set deadlines: "If homework isn't finished by 6:00 pm, you'll miss your favorite TV show."

Don't I Know You?

Time for being together as a family can seem virtually impossible to find in overflowing schedules.

- 🔔 **Just say "No!"** As the school year begins, eliminate commitments wherever possible. Remind yourself that volunteer activities can wait, your children cannot!
- 🔔 **Plan as a family.** Meet together for an hour before the week begins to coordinate schedules. This can prevent miscommunication and minimize stress throughout the week.