Why a Routine Is Essential for Children and Adults With ADHD

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Keeping an ADHD Routine

Chances are if you're reading this that you already have somewhat of a routine. Routines are crucial for establishing a sense of stability and security among individuals as well as families. They give your life order, and when you've got ADHD or a child with ADHD, having order can be hard to come by at times!

See what I did there? Anyway, let's look at the benefits of developing an ADHD routine for children and parents.

How Routines Benefit ADHD Children (and Their Parents)

Many children with ADHD, besides having an attention deficit, also have an executive function deficit. Executive function is what allows you to have self-control, make quick decisions, and adapt to a changing situation. It's kind of like a traffic light in your brain. Without it, traffic (thoughts) can still be processed, but not easily.

And that's where a routine comes in. A routine gives a child the sense of organization they otherwise wouldn't have. Now, this is where things get interesting. Because once a child has a routine, they'll become more organized. An organized child makes for an easier parenting life.

Now keep in mind, children not only need routines but more likely than not they *want* a routine. However, that doesn't mean you should tell your child he or she will now have a routine from now on.

You want to be subtle when you introduce a routine to your child. Try brushing your teeth together in the mornings before school and the evenings after dinner. Then slowly add one thing at a time. Before you know it, your house will be so much calmer, and your child will be well on their way to reaching their full potential as an adult.

When it comes to the actual routine, you want to include time for necessary things like chores, homework, and personal hygiene:

- **Chores.** This can be anything from picking up toys to sweeping. The reason you should include chores is that they allow your child to develop personal responsibility. This is also a great way to teach your child how to cook and clean.
- **Homework.** I recommend you spend time with your child while they do their homework and then somehow reward them for finishing it. PS: The three rewards that never fail to please are TV, play time, and money.
- **Personal hygiene.** This is the most important part of your child's routine. Knowing how to brush their teeth, bathe and groom themselves is key to succeeding in society. The sooner you make these things a habit for your child, the better.

Besides all the above benefits, having a routine will also give you plenty of opportunities to bond with your child. Whatever you do, just don't make a routine seem "routine." You're not a drill sergeant.

Note: I realize not everyone can be at home all the time to enforce any routine. If you're already using a babysitter, feel free to talk this idea over with them.

How Routines Benefit ADHD Adults (Setting One up is Easier Than You Think)

As an adult with ADHD, managing your ADHD is one of the most significant challenges you face. If you've made it far enough in life to be reading this article, then you (hopefully) know as well as I do that it's a winnable one.

You've more likely than not developed some coping mechanism to help manage your ADHD at this stage in your life. But maybe it's not enough. Maybe you want to do more. With a routine in place, you can and you will.

The difference between a routine for an adult and a child is that children aren't 100 percent responsible for following a routine. As an adult, that duty falls on you and you alone. If you're not already using a to-do list, I suggest you do. It makes following a routine easier.

So what's a routine for an adult with ADHD look like? Well, let's start with *mine*.

- **8:00 am.** Time to wake up.
- **8:05 am.** Time to shower.
- **8:35 am.** Breakfast.
- **9:00 am.** Brush teeth.
- **9:10 am.** Work-related activity begins.

- **12:00 pm.** Lunch break.
- **12:30 pm.** Back to work.
- **5:30 pm.** Dinner.
- **7:00 pm.** Back to the bathroom to brush my teeth and wash my face.
- **7:10 pm.** After dinner, I work until I reach a point that I'm satisfied with my work.

And yes, I find time to run errands and do personal "stuff" between all those intervals. You've got to be flexible when you have a routine. The funny thing about plans and routines is they rarely "go according to plan." Having a plan or a routine, which can provide some sense of direction and stability, is better than nothing.

The best way to set up your routine is to take a few moments when you're not busy and list what time you will or want to wake up at, and then go from there. Try to set reasonable expectations, otherwise, you'll fail, disappoint yourself, and quit.

If you had to come up with a routine for your child or yourself what would it include?