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Morning Madness and after-work Arsenic Hour

For many parents, getting out the door with children and all the day's supplies is the most stressful time of the day. It's a constant challenge to get out on time, without yelling and damaging that all important parenting relationship that we work so hard all day to establish. Here are some of the biggest issues that parents face, whether they are corralling toddlers or teens.

- Lack of time and organization. Items get lost and valuable time is spent looking for them. There is no specific place for these items to be kept. (keys, papers, money etc)
- Power struggles over clothes, lunches etc. Give the kids the control of what to wear and eat. Hide the junk food and let them choose from healthy food choices from the four food groups. Parents still have control over what is bought and brought into the house.
- Teens that take too long in the bathroom. Sit down and problem-solve with them. Do they need a clock in the bathroom?
- Kids that don't "listen" to directives. Get eye contact with them. Realize that small children under age five, only comply about 40% of the time and that is normal behavior. Get more organized or streamline the absolute necessities that have to be done, at least until they are older and more capable to follow directions.
- Get yourself ready first so you look pulled together and presentable. The kids can go in whatever state they end up in. (Remind yourself that you are not responsible for how they look.)
- Kids can get caught up in their game/TV show and don't want to leave. Warn them before that they only have a certain time to watch and get their agreement before the show/computer goes on.

Tips for getting out of the door alive!

- Let the kids sleep in their next day clean clothes so you don't have to nag them to get dressed. Sweatpants and T-shirts work great for this.
- Have snack bags in the car with juice boxes, fruit, and granola/nutrition bars for the children who hate breakfast.
- Have a "door" centre in the form of a desk, box, or sorting cabinet that holds keys, backpacks, paper sorters and everything one needs to bring out the door for the next day. Thus, when school field trip forms are signed, they go to the "door" centre or in someone's backpack. When a project is done, it goes to the "door" centre to be sure that it is taken out the next day.
- Buy socks in all one size and solid color as much as possible. Have a clean sock/mitt/hat bucket that all the kids can draw from and then it's much easier to do laundry without the necessary sorting.
- Buy 20 or 30 little re-sealable, spill proof lunch boxes and store chopped vegetables, nuts, crackers, cheese and meat cubes in for after-school driving, lunches, and snacks for siblings at practices, etc. Spend one night a week assembling the boxes, for fridge storage, and you have "grab and go" snacks all week.
- Limit clothing choices by removing most of the clothes in the child's drawers and keep only what they love to wear.
- Have spare bags at the "door centre" so you can grab one and fill with the hats, mitts and coats that the children refuse to wear, but need as soon as they get chilled in the car.
- Buy duvets and covers so even little children can make a bed presentable by shaking and smoothing. Hospital corners are so hard!

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- Take photos of the morning routine and upload them to photo processing sites to make a picture book. Cuddle up at night and go through the book of what kids should be expected to do in the morning. Read and talk about it like a picture book.

Tips for Smoother Homecomings

- Don't stop to shop at all costs! Do without or borrow from the neighbors. Cranky, hungry, and tired children dragged out shopping are a sure-fire recipe for tantrums after pick-up from daycare or school.
- Spend twenty minutes of quality time with your child after you have hung up your coat and changed clothes. Read a book or play Lego together. It's a quiet moment to reconnect after a long day of separation. This time will fill up your child's need for you, and they will be more willing to play on their own and let you start dinner, laundry etc. After reconnection time, ask them to help put away lunch boxes and prep for the next day.
- If you don't have time to reconnect, then involve your child in your tasks as much as possible. Get your child to shred lettuce for salad, or coat the chicken in batter. They can help put things away. Children love to help as long as they are beside you. It teaches them valuable skills and gives you time together.

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