



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
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**April 2009 – Children’s Morning Routines**

Dawn Taylor is the Community Mobilizer for Care Partnership Centre Region *Communities That Care*. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

The way the morning begins can set the tone for the rest of your child’s day. Last-minute scrambles to finish homework, frantic searches for misplaced backpacks, and scavenges for two socks that match lead to a chaotic start to the day. A well-planned morning with an unrushed send-off to school prepares your child to take on the tasks of the day in a positive frame of mind.

Keeping in mind that some things are easier said than done, here are some tips for making your family’s morning routine a pleasant one (Crosby, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2007; Canter, 1998).

Make sure your kids get enough sleep. Each night, preschoolers need 11 to 13 hours, 6 to 12 year olds need 10 to 11 hours, and teens need 9 hours of sleep. Adequate sleep is key to a peaceful morning.

Deliver rise-and-shine greetings a few minutes earlier than necessary. During this time, invite your children to enjoy a glass of juice or milk. The trick is to get them to sit up. Once they’re up, spend a couple quiet minutes together talking about things to look forward to in the coming day.

If television is allowed, tune in to an approved channel in a room other than the bedroom then turn up the volume. Shamelessly lure them from their beds with the sounds of their favorite television characters.

Prepare everything needed the night before. NO exceptions. Make sure clothes, shoes, coats, and virtually anything else needed for the day are selected and laid out. Have a breakfast plan. Make sure lunches are packed, permission slips are signed, and homework is completed and in backpacks.

Hang a message board near the door. Post a list of items that need to go out the door each day. For example, gym clothes on Monday, clarinet on Wednesday, backpack and lunch every day. Include after school activities and pick-up times.

Designate a place near the door as a “launch pad.” Backpacks, outerwear, athletic equipment, band instruments, and other needed items should be in position and ready for a smooth morning lift-off.

Before stepping outside, run through the list of items needed for the day one last time. “Lunch? Backpack? Hockey stick?” Who doesn’t have at least one memory of leaving behind a child’s backpack or band instrument in the mad rush to get out the door in the morning, only to have to hand deliver it to school later in the day?

Keep it positive. You are the leader of the pack so the tone you set is important. If your kids see you getting frazzled or angry, their behavior will reflect it. If things start to get crazy, take a deep breath and evaluate what's getting in the way of the peaceful morning you had planned. Identify problem areas and consider ways to do things differently tomorrow. One thing you can count on is that you'll have another chance to work on perfecting your family's morning routine in a short 24 hours.

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