

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Starting the Day on a Loving Note

“O what a beautiful morning, O what a beautiful day,
I have a wonderful feeling, everything’s going my way.”

~ Rodgers and Hammerstein

NARU KWINA could turn your morning routine into a rap song. That’s how he teaches difficult science concepts to elementary school children. (Check out *HipLearning.com*.) My silly rap lyrics: “First comes breakfast, then clear your space, brush your teeth, now wash your face.” Children are often more willing to comply with musical requests than remind-ers, and mornings are a time when families need light-hearted gimmicks. Parents are faced with the challenge of maintaining loving feelings while they make sure children’s engines don’t stall before they get out the door.

An argument before school about what outfit to wear or what to eat for breakfast can dampen everyone’s mood. Conflicts can also take time to resolve. Ideally, mornings are the time to fill everyone up with good feelings that kick-start the whole day. In *The Science of Parenting*, Margot Sutherland suggests that hellos and good-byes involve “lovely moments of connection.” In order to accomplish that feat, parents need to nurture themselves as well as their children. Parents who manage mornings with a smile deserve a medal for creativity and calm.

Here are some ideas for starting the day with good feeling:

Prepare for a good morning the night before. Choosing clothes and laying them out and setting up for breakfast can be fun evening activities and help to avoid conflict the next day. Some parents even have children sleep in the next day’s clean clothes, leaving more time for positive morning activities.

Sneak in snuggles and loving moments. Spending even five minutes reading a book or snuggling makes a crucial difference in a child’s day. One mother, an executive who had a pre-schooler and baby to get out the door in the morning, at first found the idea of spending time with each of them before leaving home outrageous. When she shifted her schedule to spend minutes of one-on-one time with her three-year-old, it transformed their mornings. She said, “I got my daughter back.”

Hold a family meeting about mornings. If you’re having morning hassles, try having a meeting to discuss them, inviting everyone to offer ideas about how things could go better. Asking children for their thoughts makes them feel valued and included, and family members can think more rationally outside the morning rush.

Make time for yourself. Fifteen minutes of quiet before everyone else arises can make the critical difference in our day. Before the rush, we can think affirming thoughts that program us for positivity. The Dalai Lama advises waking with these ideas: “Today I am fortunate to have woken. I am alive, I have a precious human life, I am not going to waste it. I am giving to all.”

Indeed, parents are constant “givers,” and taking time for themselves provides essential refreshment.

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