

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Starting the Day on a Positive Note*

**B**EFORE SCHOOL, I SMILED and said “Hi” to an elementary school child who was standing on the steps looking at the parking lot. “No, don’t you be happy,” she responded. “I want to be with my mom.” If she couldn’t feel cheerful after her mother had just driven off, she didn’t want me to feel upbeat either. Mornings are often deprived of good feeling, and those who study the science of happiness tell us that making efforts to change our mornings will transform our lives.

In *Operation Happiness: The 3-Step Plan to Creating a Life of Lasting Joy, Abundant Energy, and Radical Bliss*, Kristi Ling explains that focusing on the quality of our mornings is the best way to establish a sense of peace and well-being. Parents often complain about mornings full of power struggles and racing the clock, habits that create anxiety that can last for hours. If we wake up with thoughts about situations that might go wrong that day, or a constant feeling that we’re running behind schedule, we’re unconsciously creating a mindset that will program the day to feel off-kilter to ourselves and our children.

Ling advises starting with paying attention to our waking-up thoughts (“This is going to be a hard day,” “I’m not up to all I have to do today”) and working on redesigning them. Our children catch our moods, and talking positively about the day helps them start off with feelings of happy anticipation and peace.

The key lies in changing our schedule so we have time to get ready without rushing and for talking with our child about things to look forward to during the day before we reconnect after school.

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