

Special Foster Care & Therapeutic Respite Care

Tips, Tools & Resources

Helping Your Kids Get Organized

Where to Start

- **Decide What Is Important** Your child may not need to have every aspect of his life organized, so figure out together what activities or times cause the most stress and make sure that routines are established for those. Does the morning routine always cause stress? Plan this out carefully. Is soccer practice driving everyone crazy? Develop a plan for when the gym bag gets packed.
- **Stick to the Routine** Once you make plans, be sure that you both follow them. While there will be times when flexibility is needed, following the routine will help your child understand how a routine keeps his life running smoothly. Make this connection for him by saying things like, "Wow, we got to the bus with no problems today, your morning checklist really worked!"
- **Reinforce Your Child's Successes** Acknowledge the times when he is able to stay organized and help problem solve when the routine doesn't work. While problem-solving, don't be afraid to change direction mid-stream. This way, the focus is on the process, not the child, on success, rather than failure.
- **Stay Involved** Once your child gets a handle on his routine, he will still need your help and support. Make sure to check in with him and ask how the routine is working. This will also make it easier for you to help him brainstorm problems and solutions in his planning as they arise.

Some Specifics

Collaborative Room Cleaning Many parents make the mistake of telling a child to go clean his room, without ever really teaching him what that means. Parents should keep in mind that a child's room should be his haven. Wait until the room is a colossal mess and then wade in cheerfully. This way, the child can clearly "see" the problem, and working through the clean-up will reinforce the thought process and problem-solving mentality of doing so. Begin by sitting on the floor with the child and talking about what he likes about his room. Negotiate what can be left out on "display" and what should be put away. Then have the child suggest best places for both categories, waiting on his answers before jumping in with your own. While the chosen location might not be what you planned, if it is one the child prefers, then he is more likely to keep it clean. The goal: a place for everything and everything in its place.

Checklists Reign Be it packing for a trip, a morning routine, or the process for cleaning a room, checklists and charts can be an invaluable tool. However, as with room cleaning, these tools should be created in collaboration with your child. Once you both have agreed upon the steps, then refer to those steps when tasks or routines arise. Often calling them out by number in a jovial tone ("Have we got that pesky number 3 done yet?") allows for humor in the moment and offers an opportunity for connection with your child by being comrades in arms while working toward a common accomplishment.



Sources: • <http://onetoughjob.org/stress.aspx>
• Patricia M. Dashiell, Ph.D.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent Training Exercise

Why is working with a child important when helping him get organized?

Describe two different scenarios where helping a child get organized might better the experience and how a parent might go about the process.

What are some areas in your own child's (children's) life (lives) where organization might be of benefit?

Return to your caseworker for evaluation. Accurate answers can result in a training credit of 1/2 hour.