



Mornings, Just a Little Easier

Busy parents, a quick note about this resource.

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Using the chart isn't the important part. Yup, you heard me. If you don't use the chart, it will be OK. Life will go on. (And I will still want to talk to you.)

By the way, Amazon or Pinterest are filled with ideas and tools that may work better for your family than a paper chart. (search: [daily checklist for kids](#).)

What is important?

- Thinking about the ideas on the pages after the chart.
- Allowing a new lens of understanding about the morning stress.
- Giving yourself permission to experiment to see if a little change will help the morning go smoother.

And look at you, already downloading tools to make your life easier! You are doing the important stuff right now.

Wishing you many calm mornings,

Andrea

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p.s. If you have questions or comments about how it is going, please reach out. I love to hear how this is working (or not working) for your family.

THE MORNING SCHOOL ROUTINE

Planned Stops on my Journey out the Door

What is my focus this week? _____

What may distract me? _____

What positive action will bring me back to focus on this routine? _____

What does success look like? _____

Activity	M	T	W	Th	F
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					

What do I notice about the week? _____

I am proud of myself this week because _____

Change needed? _____

IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION

- When broken down into smaller steps, a morning routine has MANY steps to complete. To run smoothly, the person needs to make **transitions between tasks and choose not to be distracted** by more interesting activities. No wonder the morning routine frequently causes stress!
- With your child, talk about the steps that go into having a positive, smooth morning. It may only be a dream at this point but dream big together. It is possible to make changes. This might start with making a list of things they normally do in the morning and ask if that is working well. (This also may reveal that they are not aware of what needs to happen, or they are skipping steps thinking it doesn't matter, etc.) Then transfer the list to the chart, putting each step in the order they think will work well. Next week, it may change.
- Each week, **completing the routine is like an experiment**. Does this list of things to do work to make the morning and the day flow smoothly? Does this list help me to not forget important things? At the end of the page, there is a place to note any changes for the next week. Reviewing this checklist at the end of the week allows reflection time. If it doesn't work, what are ideas that may allow the morning to go smoother? Then choose one change and try that possible solution next week.
- **No one is perfect.** And this morning routine doesn't have to be perfect. Keep in mind that in 2023, only **nine** MLB baseball players had a batting average over .300. This means that less than 10 players hit the ball 30% of the time they were up to bat. So, getting 70% of the list done without reminders? Awesome work! This calls for celebration, especially if last week, reminders needed to happen 50% of the time.

- Thinking about the questions at the top of the page before Monday morning rolls around provides a chance to **collaborate on how to ensure success**. Brief answers are fine. No need for complete sentences.

For younger children, ask them the questions and take notes, so YOU remember their answers. For teenagers, ask them to fill it out and then share key things they think will be hard or easy, or why they chose a particular focus for the week. It isn't a time to judge responses; instead, I suggest **asking questions out of curiosity** and helping the teen be empowered to set goals they think will best serve them and the family.

- I hope you **give yourself grace as you improve and as you hit bumps in the road**. Parenting isn't easy. Mornings aren't easy. But you are here, willing to take small steps to make mornings a little bit easier. That matters.

QUESTIONS AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

- **Focus this week:** For the ADHD brain, **routine is boring and therefore hard to do.**

Providing a weekly reason to complete the checklist can add novelty, and perhaps a bit of a challenge. Doing the routine without the list will take many, many, many repetitions.

Set small goals like:

- completing one task that has been a huge challenge in previous weeks.
- determining how long each activity *really* takes. Try timing each activity with a stopwatch or writing down the time each activity ended.
- completing each task each day. Make a checkmark or smiley face after doing the activity.
- stop parents from nagging me all morning. Tally each comment from a parent or sibling to get back on task. Maybe next week's goal can be reducing that number by 10%.
- moving smoothly from one task to the next without getting distracted. Use checkmarks or smiley faces if it works. If there was a distraction, briefly note what the distraction was to figure out if there is a pattern. It is hard to change what we don't see.

TECH-FREE MORNINGS

TRACK TIME PASSING WITH:

- a visual timer
- a morning family playlist playing from a central location

TRACK TIMING WITH:

- set announcements of the time (make it fun, not annoying), perhaps every 15 minutes at first
- an egg timer set for however long the next step or few steps will take

- **Possible Distractions:** If we know what might get us distracted, we are better able to plan how to avoid that distraction. The Distractions and the Positive Actions might match each other. Or take a few moments to brainstorm how to best avoid the distraction. Common distractions include phones, TV, toys, books, getting lost in our own thoughts, playing with siblings, running around and then not returning to where they started to remind themselves to go to the next task, etc. Not having access to the distraction often is the best strategy.
- **Positive Action for Refocus:** Remaining positive will help set the tone for the rest of the day. For everyone, positive self-talk is important. And **positive talk with each other is more motivating to make changes.** Deciding what to say when a distraction happens in advance can help ease the friction when the inevitable “Squirrel!” moment happens.

What is compassionate phrase or sentence to say or action to take when distractions inevitably happen? These self-talk suggestions are meant to convey a light-hearted or playful tone.

- “Where was I again? Oh yes, rocking my morning routine. What’s next?”
- Sing: Oops, I did it again.
- “Oh squirrel! I’ll return once my routine is complete!”
- “I can do hard things. The routine is hard, but I can do it.”

- **Success Looks Like:** No one likes to hit a moving target. **By establishing what success looks like beforehand, the expectations are understood by everyone involved.** When they set a goal and meet it, there is reason to celebrate. When they set a goal and don’t meet it, it is time to look at what happened and figure out any changes necessary to get there. *Sometimes, coming up with a new idea to try is a success.*

QUESTIONS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE

- **What Do I Notice:** An important part of managing our ADHD symptoms is seeing them in action and deciding what to do about it. **Having a visual of how the week *actually* went instead of how I *feel* the week went is an important tool.** I recommend the child/teen and the parent take time to see patterns before sharing what they notice. Let the child/teen go first in sharing – you may be surprised at their insights.
- **Proud of ... because...:** **ADHD brains are primed to see the negative. So often that is what is pointed out to us or that is how we feel about not meeting our own expectations.** But the brain is easily trained, if we take the time to do it. What happened during the week that brought out a sense of accomplishment or a sense of connection? What words or actions felt like a positive reaction? This is not about putting yourself above others, but it is about noticing where things went well and that felt good.
- **Changes?** There is no point in continuing to have something in the routine if it is no longer necessary, so take it out. Or maybe a new distraction popped up that needs a different approach. Change could be finding out each task really does take longer than expected, so the wake-up time needs to be earlier.

THE MORNING SCHOOL ROUTINE – EXAMPLE PAGE

Planned Stops on my Journey out the Door

What is my focus this week? Getting out of bed when the alarm goes off – list time out of bed

What may distract me? Day dreaming, or not keeping track of time

And, what positive action(s) will bring my focus back to this routine? Hocus Pocus, lost my focus!

What does success look like? Getting out of bed within 3 minutes of alarm 4 out of 5 days

Activity	M	T	W	Th	F
1. Get out of bed when alarm goes off					
2. Bring clothes to the bathroom					
3. Turn on bathroom fan					
4. Complete shower routine					
5. Dry myself and apply lotion (arms and behind knees)					
6. Get dressed					
7. Hang up towel and replace bathmat					
8. Take pajamas to my room – on bed or in hamper					
9. Eat breakfast					
10. Clean up breakfast food and dishes					
11. Take meds					
12. Empty dishwasher					
13. Brush hair					
14. Brush teeth					
15. Apply deodorant					
16. Get backpack					
17. Head to the car					

What do I notice about the week? _____

I am proud of myself this week because _____

Change needed? _____