

Creating a set morning routine

This is **Cup of Sunshine** – your Friday Podcast brought to you by the Phoenix Centre Team of the Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg.

Welcome! I'm Fiona Schaefer, the Coordinator for Inclusion. Over the next few weeks my colleagues, Frau Fleck, Frau Gießen-Hood, Dr Froschauer and I are going to share some helpful hints and tips for managing life during the uncertain times of Covid-19. Today I would like to speak about the positive impact a set **morning routine** can have on your entire day.



Since the beginning of lockdown, most of our normality, our routine and our stability have been taken away from us. We can feel quite overwhelmed by this uncertain situation, which could last another year or another month. The loss of routine can feel like a loss of control and most of us probably struggle to accept that at the moment our lives are being dictated by external circumstances we cannot influence. An important tool to gain the feeling of being in control back is to structure your day. Instead of focussing on things you can't influence you will shift your focus to something you can influence and control.

A morning routine is vital in this regard and you can use it like a tool. It can help you set your mood and your intentions for the entire day. It will help you to manage tiredness and to boost your energy levels and productivity.

A morning routine is even important for children than it is for us. Our kids lost their usual structure and routine as well. Once a routine is set and followed through, children are less likely to act out and it is up to us to create a sense of security for them. Especially a predictable morning routine helps them to get through their school work and their day. Knowing what they are supposed to get done in the morning, from brushing their teeth to making their bed, will help them to work hand in hand with you. And since getting an entire family up and ready for the day during the early morning hours can be quite stressful, having a set routine can definitely prevent little and big catastrophes (or at least an emotional meltdown here and there).

Here are a few ideas what to keep in mind when establishing your new morning routine:

- Create a chart or plan showing to-do's and activities for each family member. This can be a daily or weekly plan with allocated times for each activity. Include everyone in drawing up the plan to make your kids aware of the planned structure for their day. Especially for your older children, a sense of self-determination is very important. For smaller kids you can finish off with a fun activity each day to give them something to look forward to. A plan will give them more responsibility and the possibility to get back to it during the day. In the morning you can go through the plan for the day and discuss together "what are we going to do today?".
- There can obviously be a special morning routine for the weekends. The times can change and it can include more time for cuddling in bed, morning play time, making a special breakfast together and so on.

- You can prepare breakfast or snacks for in between the night before to free up some time in the morning.
- Depending on their age, you can pick clothes for your child the night before or let them choose their outfit for the next day. Like that, younger children can start getting dressed by themselves and less time will be spent on choosing clothes in the morning. At the same time, involving your child in decisions for the day, will give him or her more control over their own morning routine.
- A set sleep pattern is very important as well. It will help you fight tiredness and to feel more refreshed in the morning. As much as you should create a bedtime routine for yourself and for your kids, you should have a set time to wake up in the morning. Make sure everyone gets enough sleep and adjust your waking up times to the amount of sleep each family member requires. When getting up, avoid hitting the snooze button, even though you might not have to rush to beat traffic at the moment.
- Get up a little earlier than your kids. This will give you time for your own rituals and routine before their day starts. You can use the time to exercise, do a little yoga or meditation to set your focus. You can read something inspirational, have your first coffee in bed or write in a journal. Pick something that helps you have a positive mindset for the day. Try to avoid your phone and other electronics for as long as possible.
- When creating your own to-do's for the day, please keep in mind that you might not be able to work in the same high pace you were used to before the lockdown. Working remotely with your family present, having to support the kids with distance learning, managing the household and your emotional wellbeing can be very demanding. It creates completely new dynamics and different conditions for your workday. So be kind to yourself. Set realistic goals to avoid getting frustrated because you might not have been able to finish everything.
- A little exercise in the morning will boost your energy levels and will help you to stay focussed later. Since the times for exercise outside your four walls is currently limited to the early mornings, you might want to make use of the short time window with your whole family. Take the kids for a walk or cycle to help them keep their energy levels balanced during the day.
- Especially for the younger kids, you can introduce little rituals right before they start their schoolwork. This can be a little song you sing together or a story you read. This will give the beginning of their workday a positive connotation.

Try out what works for you and your family. With a set morning routine, you will set your day and be able to reach your goals with more ease. But most importantly, you will feel back in control and focus on positive things and actions you can influence.

That's all for today. I hope you'll join us next week for more helpful hints and tips for managing life during the times of Covid-19.