### Six Benefits of Using Routines with Your Kids

☺ And the seventh benefit is for parents ☺

***1. Routines eliminate power struggles*** because you aren't bossing them around.  This activity (brushing teeth, napping, turning off the TV to come to dinner) is just what we do at this time of day.  The parent stops being the bad guy, and nagging is greatly reduced.

***2. Routines help kids cooperate*** by reducing stress and anxiety for everyone.  We all know what comes next, we get fair warning for transitions, and no one feels pushed around, or like parents are being arbitrary.

***3.  Routines help kids learn to take charge of their own activities.*** Over time, kids learn to brush their teeth, pack their backpacks, etc., without constant reminders.  Kids love being in charge of themselves. This feeling increases their sense of mastery and competence.  Kids who feel more independent and in charge of themselves have less need to rebel and be oppositional.

***4. Kids learn the concept of "looking forward"*** to things they enjoy, which is an important part of making a happy accommodation with the demands of a schedule.  He may want to go to the playground now, but he can learn that we always go to the playground in the afternoon, and he can look forward to it then.

***5. Regular routines help kids get on a schedule***, so that they fall asleep more easily at night.

***6. Routines help parents build in those precious connection moments.*** We all know we need to connect with our children every day, but when our focus is on moving kids through the schedule to get them to bed, we miss out on opportunities to connect. If we build little connection rituals into our routine, they become habit. Try a snuggle with each child when you first see them in the morning, or a "recognition" ritual when you're first reunited: "*I see you with those beautiful gray eyes that I love so much!"* or a naming ritual as you dry him after the bath: *"Let's dry your toes...your calf...your knee...your thigh....your penis....your belly ..."*Rituals like these slow you down and connect you on a visceral level with your child, and if you do them as just "part of the routine" they build security as well as connection and cooperation.

***7. Schedules help parents maintain consistency in expectations.*** If everything is a fight, parents end up settling: more TV, skip brushing teeth for tonight, etc.  With a routine, parents are more likely to stick to healthy expectations for everyone in the family, because that's just the way we do things in our household.  The result: a family with healthy habits, where everything runs more smoothly!

The great things about a bedtime routine…

**1. You get special time to connect with each child alone,** that your kids can count on. This remains important as kids get older, because it gives the ten year old an opportunity to raise difficult issues and feel heard.

**2. Each child gets the security of a safe, predictable, routine at bedtime**, which studies have shown is associated with better sleep for everyone in the family, as well as happier, more secure, kids.

**3. As your kids get older, they learn self care:** to bathe themselves and brush their own teeth, because you have helped them develop the habit.

**4. Packing a backpack and setting out clothes makes kids more competent and independent** by teaching them to think about the next day. This is invaluable, not just because it makes mornings calmer. It also allows them to suddenly remember things they have forgotten -- that tomorrow they need a change of clothes because the class is painting a mural, or that they forgot about a homework assignment. (Of course, if they remember these things at bedtime frequently, it's a sign that your after-school routine needs some attention!)

**5. Having a routine with times attached keeps you from being the bad-guy bedtime cop**. It's just the schedule.

**6. Having a set bedtime as a youngster helps your kids, once they become teens, to think in terms of how much sleep they need** to take good care of their bodies. They are more likely to stay well-rested.

**7. You get to check in with each child separately,** which really helps if you've been apart all day.  You have more chance of hearing what's bothering them.  And you get Special time with your older child, which keeps you connected at that difficult moment when he's heading into the tween years -- and peer issues can crowd out his relationship with you, even though he desperately needs to stay anchored to you.

**8. Bedtime routines that center around baths and reading calm kids and allow them to fall asleep faster** so they don't toss and turn. (Many kids say they aren't tired when they are actually overly wound-up.) A bedtime routine that allows a child to stay up longer because he is reading creates the habit of reading. If a computer is nearby, most kids won't read. But computers and TV suppress melatonin, the sleep hormone, so kids should definitely not use them in the hour before bed. Reading relaxes kids, allows melatonin to flood their bodies (make sure their lights are not too bright), and is the best way to raise kids' IQs and school grades.

Found on…http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/family-life/structure-routines