

## Outline of A Day in the Life of a Little Person

The child under six thrives on order and routine.

We know that to build internal order, we must provide the child with external order. What does this mean?

It simply means that we stick to routine as far as possible. In times of uncertainty, in which we currently find ourselves in, we should think of routine and order like we think of a plumb line.

A plumb line is a weight suspended from a length of cord. When held in a certain way, this tool is used as a reference line to find the true centre of a structure. Once the true centre has been discovered, the plumb line hangs dead centre and the builder is assured that whatever he is building will stand strong, level and centered.

It is impossible to get our 'plumb line' back to centre during these trying times. However, we should strive to bring it as close to centre as possible. We do this by providing our children with order, keeping to our routines as much as possible.

Of course, it is tempting to stay in our pajamas all day, to have the freedom to go to bed and rise whenever we feel like it. As tempting as this is, it can lead to feelings of unease and a sense of loss of control of our world.

By sticking to regular meal and bedtimes, we manage to hold onto the bit of normalcy that we can. Obviously, there can be some flexibility, if you and your child are really stuck into an activity that you are enjoying, no need to stop abruptly because it is 12h30 and you have lunched every day at 12h30. It is not harmful to complete what you're working on and have lunch at say, 13h00.

What is important is to keep the flow of the day within order. So, for example, if you wake up around 07h30, you maybe have a drink and something to eat, then straight after you'll brush your teeth and get dressed and get into a few activities. Thereafter you'll perhaps prepare some lunch and after lunch you might read a story and then have a nap. After napping you may spend some time playing games or doing some gardening, have some snack, work on an arts and crafts project and then prepare dinner together. After dinner, you may have a bath, brush teeth and settle for a story at around 19h00/20h00 then bedtime.

By skipping bath time or switching to bathing in the morning and then doing activities just before bedtime, confusion and rebellion may come into play. Why? Because your child's sense of order and routine is out of sync. So, it may not necessarily be the amount of time it takes us to do things, it could very well be the order in which we are doing them.

The way in which we do an activity has its own sense of order. Let's think of a baking activity.

We will always set up the activity with everything we need before we begin.

Everything will be set up from left to right (as this is how we read and write; hence, we are reinforcing this habit through everyday life.)

We would perhaps preheat the oven just as we are about to start our baking activity to give it time to warm up.

We'd mix all our ingredients together, place them on our baking tray or in our muffin tray and then we'd go and pop it in the oven so that it could bake for the allocated time needed.

Whilst we're waiting for our treats to finish baking, we'd start to clean up.

Once we've cleaned up, our treats may be ready, so we'd check them and then remove them.

We'd then set the table whilst they cooled and then we'd invite whoever is in the house with us to enjoy some tea and muffins or a slice of cake for example.

If we were to decide that once the treats were ready to eat, we must then clean up, our child would most likely throw a tantrum as they don't have the capacity to understand "wait" like we do.

Hence, we do things in a certain order, we prepare, bake, tidy up and then enjoy.

Think of the disaster that would take place if we were to bake the cake with only half the ingredients? Or if we placed all the ingredients onto the tray without mixing them together first?

By following the order of things, we create routine and calmness and a feeling of being safe follows.

What we must remember is that home is always home. We must not try to replicate the classroom at school or to turn our homes into a classroom.

There are plenty activities that can be done in the home to keep your child stimulated, engaged and centered.

The children will not forget how to work with the materials at school if they are away from them for a while, remember, they have this beautiful, amazing absorbent mind which allows them to take in and store information effortlessly. They will not forget!

They may take some time to adjust when things do go back to normal, this is totally understandable and acceptable given our circumstances.

Remember that globally, millions of people are experiencing what we are experiencing, as disconnected and estranged from life as we may be feeling, we are all connected and have been brought together through this pandemic.

We will overcome. We will come out stronger and firmly united like never before.

Our plumb lines will once again be centered.

## Some ideas on how to establish a regular routine

### Morning

- Wake up (as close to regular wake up time as possible)
- Have a drink (Coffee or tea for parents, milk, tea etc. for little ones)
- Have breakfast (let your little one help to prepare as much as possible)
- Take dishes to the sink
- Brush teeth
- Get dressed

### Mid- Morning

- Allow some uninterrupted work time
- Build puzzles
- Sort laundry
- Tidy up living areas (assist with dishes/ tidying bedrooms etc.)
- Prepare snack
- Read a story

### Lunch

- Allow your little one to help you prepare lunch (passing items, washing veggies, buttering bread etc.)
- Let them set the table
- Have lunch
- Tidy up

### Afternoon

- Nap time if your child naps
- Quiet play if your child does not require a nap (paging through a book for instance can be a quiet activity.)
- Spend some time in the garden
- Play a game outside (make an obstacle course, scavenger hunt, watch the birds etc.)
- More inside activities like tidying up

### Late afternoon/ early evening

- Prepare for dinner
- Enjoy dinner together
- Tidy up (carry dishes to sink, scrape leftovers into the compost bin etc.)
- Have a bath
- Brush teeth
- Story time
- Bedtime

## Troubleshooting

My child does not want to go to bed at their regular time

Once you get back into setting your regular routine up, this will get easier. Be loving, yet firm when setting boundaries such as bedtime

My child doesn't want to get dressed

Role model by dressing yourself and use language like 'during the day, we dress in our normal clothes, our pajamas are for after bath.'

Give a choice of two outfits for your child to choose from and let them dress themselves as far as possible.

Once routine is back in order, this will settle.

My child doesn't want to do any activities with me

It is ok if your child would rather observe you working with something first. This is a way for them to take in information as well.

For the under 3's your child will work better if you work in collaboration with them. They love having an adult alongside them, not necessarily to do the activity with them, but to assure them and be close to them.

The older child should be able to do some activities without assistance from an adult.

Make the invite fun 'Come look, I've got something to show you!'

Once they've started the activity, step back and let them do it in their own way.

If they are folding laundry and don't do it the way you would, leave them be. Once they have completed the activity and have moved on, by all means refold but please, not in front of them as this can break little spirits who've put in great effort to complete a task in their own way. (same goes for dressing and putting on clothes back to front or shoes on the wrong feet.... they will get there! Celebrate that they got their own trousers and shoes on rather than correction.)

My child refuses to bath

Always offer two choices: 'It's bath time. You can get into the bath yourself, or I can help you.' (allow some time for the child to respond) if they do not get into the bath, pick them up and put them in the bath. Yes, there will be tears and resistance, but your child will know that you mean business and giving them two clear choices will get them to realise that either way they are getting into the bath. What you say goes!

You can use this tactic for pretty much any refusal that you encounter with your child.

Remember, children push boundaries to test whether they are in fact there. They feel safer with boundaries and as their custodians, we are responsible for putting those boundaries in place.