

Take Control of Your Back to School Schedule

As any experienced parent knows, when school starts each fall, it is not only the children that start school again, the entire family does. The adaptation from the summer routine to the school routine affects everyone and can be a difficult adjustment. Beginning the fall schedule with a definite plan will allow you to set limits on your time and energy demands.

Establish your family's priorities. Decide how many after-school activities your family, time, and budget can reasonably support without unduly taxing your family's emotional and financial resources. One child may be limited to one activity if it involves 4-5 afternoons each week, while another may have multiple activities that each only require one afternoon.

Don't over-extend yourself or your family. Determine how many extracurricular activities your family can support without undue taxation of your time, energy and finances. Then discuss with your children which activities are most important to them and choose only those you can support without creating a burden.

Just say "No" to excess obligations. When an opportunity to accept new responsibility presents itself, ask:

- Is this a priority in my life?
- Do I feel called to take on this project?
- If I do not do this, is there someone else who will?
- What will it cost me to devote my energy and time to this?
- How will it impact those around me?
- How will it impact my other responsibilities?

This is not intended as a cop out to avoid responsibilities in which you really should engage, but a caution against taking on several duties which may jeopardize the quality of your family life.

Use the resources your family has to lessen the burden on any one person. Spread out responsibilities, such as transportation to practices and games, helping with homework, doing household chores, cooking dinner, etc. Ask your children and spouse to take on additional duties, as appropriate. Find out what your extended family is interested in doing to help. What is a burden to you may be a pleasure to an extended family member, as long as they do not feel infringed upon. Allow others to help without feeling guilty. However, be alert to signs that indicate fatigue on their part as well.

Develop a schedule that reflects your values. Establish more structure in areas such as chores, homework, exercise, and family time. Plan dinner together a few times throughout each week, set limits on television and video game time, and set aside time for devotions. You do not have to be victimized by your schedule. By taking control of your activities and obligations, you can emphasize your priorities and better demonstrate those to your children.

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