

# Parenting Together

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## The Importance of Routines

For most of us, our lives involve a series of patterns - routines we perform almost every day, like grabbing coffee from the same place each day on the way to work. This is also true for babies and toddlers. While we play a part in creating routines in our children's lives, we may not fully realize the role those routines play in their development.

**Routines provide the two key ingredients necessary for learning: relationships and repetition.**

### Routines and Self-Control

Routines help babies and toddlers learn self-control. Consistent routines, activities that happen at about the same time and in about the same way each day, provide comfort and a sense of safety to young children. Whether it is time to play, time for a snack, a nap, or a loved one to return, knowing what will happen next gives babies and toddlers security and emotional stability. It helps them learn to trust that caring adults will provide what they need. When children feel this sense of trust and safety, they are free to do their "work," which is to play, explore, and learn.



### Routines and Power Struggles

Routines can bring you and your child closer together and reduce power struggles. Consistent routines allow babies and toddlers to anticipate what will happen next. This gives young children confidence, and also a sense of control, like when parents give options such as: "It's time for bed. Would you like to brush teeth now or after we get your pajamas on?" Routines can also limit the amount of "no's" and behavior corrections you have to give throughout the day, since your child can better predict what should happen next: "I know you want a cracker. But it is clean-up time now. Remember, after clean-up, it is snack-time."

### Routines and Safety

Routines help guide positive behavior and safety. Routines are like instructions—they guide children's actions toward a specific goal. Routines can be used for many reasons, but two of the most important are ensuring children's health and safety, and helping children learn positive, responsible behavior. A couple examples are having children wash their hands before they eat, or holding an adult's hand when crossing the street.

### Routines and Transitions

Routines help children cope with transitions. Depending on your child's temperament, transitions between activities may be easy or more difficult. Going from play to lunch, lunch to the store, the store to home...and especially transitioning to bed time, can be challenging. Routines (like bedtime routines) can help make transitions easier. Some parents use a



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timer or a “5-minute warning” to prepare their toddlers for a change in activity. Other ideas are using a book, song, or special game. Special rituals can also help transition a child from one caregiver to the next.

**Example:**

*Each day, Guerin and his mom count the steps as they walk up to the child care center. They leave his coat on "his" hook then go to the toy area to pick out his favorite truck. He and his mom exchange a big hug and his mom says 'Have tons of fun today! I love you so much and I'll see you after work'*

## Routines and Learning

Routines are an important opportunity for learning. Daily routines are often thought of as just “maintenance” activities: meal time, running errands, getting ready for bed, taking baths. But these everyday actions are rich opportunities to support your child’s learning and development, while also having fun. Routines offer the chance to build self-confidence, curiosity, social skills, self-control, communication skills, and more.



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**Example:**

*While grocery shopping, have your child help with something as simple as picking out apples. You can talk with your child about the color of the apples, which apples they would like, how smooth they are, counting how many you pick out, etc. Be sure to tell your child "good job!" and "thank you for helping."*

*This simple interaction opens the door for practicing language skills, using our senses, taking turns, learning about numbers, colors, etc. It also provides the chance to nurture self-confidence and self-esteem by showing your child that their choices and help are appreciated and important.*

Routines provide the two key ingredients for learning: relationships and repetition. So enjoy these “ordinary” moments with your child. If she’s having fun with you, she’s learning, too!

## Routines and Parental Happiness

Routines are satisfying for parents, too!

Not only do routines and rituals make transitions easier for children, they also help ease adults into parenthood. The early stages of becoming a parent can be overwhelming and sometimes put a strain on other relationships. Continuing a ritual from your pre-children years (like an evening out without kids!) can help. In addition, taking a special ritual from your own childhood (such as a book that was read to you, a special breakfast made for you on Sundays) can bridge your transition into a complete family unit.

## The Book Nook

*All by Myself!*

By Aiki

*Last Stop on Market Street*

(Eng @ Sp editions)

by Matt de la Pena

*The Things I Can Do!*

by Jeff Mack

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## References

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<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/the-power-of-routines>

