



September 2014

parenting

CHRISTIAN kids



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How to Thrive in a New Routine

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To ease the back-to-school transition for your family.
2. To protect your children as they tackle new subjects and face new challenges.
3. To help your children use their new routines to share Jesus with other people.

Like frozen treats on a 100-degree day, summer is melting away. That means it's time to get back into old routines and start some new ones.

Experts say routines offer kids stability and help them develop self-discipline. Knowing what to expect—and what's expected—can make family interactions smoother, too.

Follow these tips to make the most of September's opportunities to hit the "reset" button:

Have a family meeting before the school year begins. Review schedules and brainstorm new approaches to easier mornings, healthier eating, more productive studying, and so on.

Focus on just one or two goals at a time, rather than tackling everything at once. When a new habit is in place, then move on to the next goal.

Prepare for changes to your daily routine by practicing before school begins. Create simple checklists as visual reminders for getting ready.

Empower kids to make decisions. Encourage them (in age-appropriate ways) to adapt routines whenever unexpected situations arise.

Build spiritual practices into your family's daily routine. This allows faith development to occur while children are growing in other ways during the new school year. See the next page for a variety of ideas you can try.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Backward Olympics

Gather your family outdoors and conduct some silly “Scipmylo” games (that’s “Olympics” spelled backward!). For example: Take turns trying to say the alphabet backward. Run a relay race or obstacle course backward. Toss water balloons to a partner while facing away from him or her. At the end of the games, gather together and ask:

What change did you experience in these games? What was the most challenging for you, and why? How was this experience like the changes you experience in life?

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Then ask:

How does God help you handle change? How can God help you with the new school year ahead?

Close in prayer: **Dear God, thanks for being our constant, unchanging help during all of life’s changes. In Jesus’ name, amen.**

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Add Jesus Into Your Routines

When busy schedules resume, Jesus is often left out of the mix. Even if we attend church more regularly in fall and our children move up a grade level in Sunday school, faith formation frequently takes a back seat during the action-packed weekdays.

A few simple ideas for keeping Jesus at the forefront can pay big “faith dividends” for your children and your entire family. Give these tips a try this fall—and use them to spark ideas of your own:

Feed your family spiritually.

When you set the breakfast table the night before school, include kid-friendly devotional materials. Children who like to read or look at pictures while eating can do so—or can be read to briefly.

Make use of travel time. On the way to school, take turns saying a prayer for the day ahead. On the way home, use the time to share highlights of the day and any “God sightings” family members had.

Schedule a regular faith booster.

Incorporate a midweek faith activity into your family schedule. Many churches offer midweek programs for families. Other clubs may be available in your neighborhood. If you’re time-strapped, simply set aside time one day per week to talk about faith-related issues and to pray together.

Explore children’s strengths, talents, and gifts. A new school year offers a variety of excellent opportunities for kids to try new things. Different sports and activities let children discover what they enjoy and how God made them. Point out what developing talents and traits you observe in your kids. And encourage them to glorify God in everything they do (see Colossians 3:17).

Expand your family’s faith outreach.

Use new routines to help build children’s faith-sharing skills. With older kids, role-play how to talk about Jesus with their friends. Encourage your kids to invite their friends to church and Sunday school. Welcome new friends into your home, showing them Christian hospitality and love.

Move on up! As children move up to new Sunday school classes this fall, help their faith blossom with individual challenges. For example, older kids can spend 10 minutes a day reading through a particular book of the Bible. Younger children can learn about a simple Scripture passage each week.

Keep talking—to each other and to God. Real, deep conversations can suffer when families get busy. So carve out time to reconnect, whether it’s at the end of each day or at the beginning of each weekend. Share your joys and struggles, and take time to pray for one another. Also make prayer a regular part of mealtime and bedtime routines. This reminds children that God is an always-present, unchanging help every day and in all situations.

“I am the Lord, and I do not change.”—Malachi 3:6

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *The Maze Runner*
Genre: Science Fiction, Mystery
Rating: PG-13

Cast: Dylan O'Brien, Kaya Scodelario, Will Poulter

Synopsis: A boy named Thomas wakes up remembering only his name. Trapped in The Glade with other teenage survivalists, Thomas must use clues to piece together his past.

Our Take: This film, based on James Dashner's popular 2009 book, continues the dystopian trend made popular by *The Hunger Games*. Because of the theme and some sci-fi violence, exercise caution—especially with younger children.



MUSIC

Title: *Brave*
Author: Moriah Peters

Synopsis: This 21-year-old Christian singer began writing songs at age 13. Although initially self-conscious about her voice, Peters was determined to serve God through a music career. Because of her wholesome image, she didn't make it far on *American Idol*.

Our Take: On her second album, Peters sings about relying on God during times of fear and social persecution. The "Footprints in the Sand" poem inspired her single "You Carry Me," which Peters calls "a reminder to look back on the difficult times God has brought us through." That's a powerful message for young listeners—and for families.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Effects of Helicopter Parenting—Long-term studies are now weighing in on this overly involved parenting style. Despite parents' good intentions, kids often suffer when their parents constantly intervene. When parental involvement is excessive, experts say, it hinders children from developing necessary skills, strengths, and coping strategies. (*vitals.nbcnews.com*)

Games, Sites & Apps

Tomodachi Life

In this Nintendo 3DS life-simulation game, a player watches Mii characters interact. It's been compared to *Animal Crossing* but doesn't have a typical game-like structure. Rated E for Everybody

Art Games

kids.albrightknox.org/loader.html
This interactive art-based site lets kids create masterpieces of their own. They can design cards, paint in a "studio," and play several art-related games. Recommended for ages 4 to 12.

SpeakaZoo

With this free app, children can take care of 20 original creatures in four habitats. The animals actually "talk" to children, who can interact with them on screen. Recommended for ages 4 to 6.

QUICK STATS

"What Age Restrictions?"—78% of parents think it's acceptable for a child to violate minimum-age restrictions for online sites and services. And 76% of parents say their child joined Facebook when he or she was younger than 13, the site's minimum-age requirement. (*firstmonday.org*)

Obesity Denial—New government statistics reveal that 42% of children classified as obese consider themselves to be the right weight. Another study shows their parents are often in the dark, too. Almost 30% of parents who hear from a doctor that their child is obese or overweight don't perceive the weight to be a health problem. (*npr.org*; *washingtonpost.com*)

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