



Routines Rock!

I recently read this factoid: Floss your teeth every night and you can add 6.4 years to your life! That got me thinking! Building simple routines into your life has all kinds of hidden benefits. Although I can't promise that organizing and simplifying will make you live longer, it may help reduce stress and give you more time for the things that really matter. Here are a few routines to consider:

For the person who's always late:

- 1) Lay things out the night before. Plan your wardrobe, pack up the backpacks and briefcases. Have the lunches ready in the fridge.
- 2) Assign a place to put the cell, purse and keys. Some clever person coined the phrase *Landing pad*, to describe that designated area. Once you consistently hang your keys on a hook or drop them in the same basket each time you come home, you'll avoid the last minute mad dash to find them.
- 3) Pad your time. If you think a trip will take 15 minutes, allow 20-25 minutes. Account for things like: road construction, weather conditions, traffic delays or your child forgetting something...right as you are walking out the door.
- 4) Never let the gas tank get below half full. Murphy's Law says that when you are in the biggest hurry you'll be driving on fumes.

For the person who struggles with surface clutter:

There are different degrees of clutter. Everyone has surface clutter. I'm the first to admit it. We have two active boys who are interested in a lot of different things. We are constantly inundated with forms from school, church, sports and music and that doesn't even account for homework and bills. I've isolate a few reasons that people have problems with surface clutter.

- They don't know where to put the paper, so it becomes buried in a pile.
- They're afraid that out of sight will be out of mind.
- They aren't ready to make a decision.

The solutions to these three are listed below, but remember daily maintenance is required!

- 1) Create a place for bills, and school church and extra curricular information. You may choose a counter top file, basket or a three-ring binder. Here's how to set up your own [Command Center](#). I wrote a post on setting up a homework station at [Stacks and Stacks](#).
- 2) If you are nervous about forgetting things that are tucked away, look for visual storage solutions. Cubbies, stacking trays or a bulletin board might help you remember, while keeping things contained. Exercise caution with bulletin boards. They work well for some people but become clutter traps for others. Avoid having *too much* stuff out because it leads to visual tune-out. Which means you just don't notice it anymore, and that defeats the purpose!
- 3) Create a place to gather all of the information that needs to be acted on. I have a tray that collects things like: lunch forms, permission slips, appointments to schedule. I make an attempt to look at it daily.

For the person who hates to clean:

Establish a few simple daily routines and you will avoid heavy cleaning on the weekend.

- Do the dishes every day, or at least get them into the dishwasher.

- Clear the counter every night.
- Give your bathroom a speed clean every morning.
- Play Gimme five with your family. (For five minutes each night, each person picks up and puts away their things.)
- Make your bed every day.
- Make it part of your routine to complete simple tasks immediately. Hang up your coat, put away your groceries and sort your mail right away.

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Karen Henke is the owner of Come2Order in Minneapolis, MN. Visit www.come2order2day.com and sign up for a subscription to the *free* monthly newsletter.