

BACK TO SCHOOL

***Myth:** Some people are just born organized and some people aren't.*

***Fact:** Organizing is like every other skill and behavior IT IS LEARNED.*

***Learn:** Time management skills, tips and ideas so YOU can RECLAIM your life.*

Now that the kids are back to school this is a great opportunity to create a new daily schedule.

By now your children have come home with their schedule of classes and the activities they would like to participate in. With their new activities (and your schedule) getting everything accomplished can become a bit of a juggling act. All of this combined with normal day to day tasks can make the situation even more hectic.

Having a plan will ease the stress and make for a more manageable day.

Once you have created a plan for your day you will be surprised how much you are able to achieve and still have time for some of the things YOU want to do. Many of our clients are often thrilled to see they are actually able to include extra activities such as going to the gym or taking in a movie. With a few easy to do steps you can begin to re-claim and re-energize your life!

Our clients are always telling us "I was never taught to be organized." The question is often asked, "Why isn't organizing taught in school?" Organizing classes are starting to be taught in community colleges, but until it is incorporated into the primary grades, it is a great idea to teach our children and guide them ourselves. Having your children assist in the following process will give them skills they need to help them be successful throughout their lives. It has been proven time and again that organized people are more successful. Your children will develop such skills as being

Plan ahead.

To stay on top of things it is **essential** to plan ahead. Don't let your day control you.

punctual, prepared and confident. Lead by example. Set a routine for the children to follow.

We decided to address the areas where our client's express the most concern, such as: **getting your children off to school, after school activities, homework and time for yourself.**

Getting the kids off to school:

Plan breakfast/lunches ahead of time. When making your weekly schedule decide on a time for you to plan your children's meals for the week. For example, on Saturday morning take a half an hour to think about, or even discuss with your children, what they may like to see in their lunch box. Make a list of the items you will need to make these lunches. Schedule a time to grocery shop. A great idea is to do these tasks at the same time each week. If you develop a routine it will make it easier to stay on track.

Discuss with your children what they will be carrying their lunch in. Now that they have been in school for a short time they may start thinking what they are carrying just isn't cool. Compromising on what they will be carrying their lunch in will cut down on time spent hearing why they are not going to be caught dead carrying a brown paper bag or a Snoopy lunch box.

Talk with your children about what their lunch should consist of. Agree on four items and stick to these categories.

Such as:

- **A Main** - sandwich, pita wrap or pizza.
- **A Munchie** - carrots, celery, chips, pretzels.
- **A Dessert** - Jello, cookies, Twinkies.
- **A Drink** - juice box, milk, or a *Crystal Light On the Go* packet for their water.

Put your children's lunches in the same place of the refrigerator every night so in the morning the children don't waste time trying to find them.

Set up for breakfast the night before. Set the table (put out the plates, bowls, and utensils that your children may need for preparing breakfast the

Make
lunches the
night
before to
avoid an
early
morning
crunch
time.

next morning). This can be done either as you clear the table from dinner or just before you go to bed.

Put out the cereal boxes, toaster, bread, jams, peanut butter and/or fruit. If your children are old enough, they can help in this process. This will encourage responsibility and increase their independence.

Stage for efficiency. Keys, purse, brief case and backpack should be staged the night before in an assigned location. This will eliminate the stress of trying to locate these items as you are all rushing toward the door.

After school activities & homework:

Prioritize activities. Sit down with your children and have them write down all the activities they would like to participate in. Then have them list them in order of importance (the ones they would like to do the most). According to your families schedule, determine how many activities you would like your child to participate in. Keep in mind they will still need time to do homework and chores.

Make A Weekly Schedule Chart with Your Children. Now that you and your children have decided on the activities they will participate in have them put these activities into a weekly schedule chart. Have your children help make it. Their active involvement in these processes will make it easier for them to follow and understand. On this chart you will insert all activities including their chores, travel time, homework, etc. Your children will soon see the actual time it takes to do things and the time available. The chart will also help to illustrate why they are not able to do as much as they would like. In addition it will cut down on the questions such as "but why can't I play basketball, tennis and soccer this fall?"

Time for yourself:

Create your own schedule: Your children are now following a schedule. It's time for you to do the same. Follow the same procedures as above: write down all the tasks/activities you have to accomplish or would like to do. Prioritizing them and putting them in a schedule will be beneficial for you as well. Making a priority list and schedule will help you stay on track and not

stray. It has recently been proven that people are actually more productive doing and completing one task at a time rather than multi-tasking.

Concentrating on one activity will save time spent jumping from one thing to another, possibly making mistakes and becoming overwhelmed. Write down your tasks and put them on your schedule with the time blocked out that you will dedicate to it. Once you are focused on the task you will be surprised just how fast you are able to accomplish it.

Create a space that is your own: Create a space in your room, study or den where you can spend some time alone. You can only benefit your family if you take care of yourself as well. When writing your schedule experiment by adding fun items such as giving yourself a pedicure or reading your favorite magazine. Another option is meditation. Put on your favorite CD, close your eyes and practice relaxation techniques, such as Yoga. Practicing meditation before bed time will also help you unwind and prepare you for a restful night's sleep. After just one evening you will experience the benefits. You will begin to recharge and experience a new sense of calmness.

Follow these guidelines and start enjoying a more **efficient** and **productive** life. Remember like any new program it takes time and practice. The main thing is to keep it up. Being organized is an on going process but the benefits are worth the effort.