



## Self Regulation

When children are very young, we as their parents regulate their needs. We use schedules for feeding, bathing and sleeping. This allows us to find enough time in the day to serve their needs. Over time the child learns to self regulate to serve their own needs. For some children as they become adolescents their ability to self regulate is not as developed as they need, therefore they have great difficulty in finding the time in the day to do the activities of daily living like bathing, brushing their teeth and cleaning up after themselves. If it is difficult for them to manage these essential habits, it only becomes more difficult to learn to manage time for school work, chores and other healthy habits.

The idea of self regulating is a very important concept. As adolescents grow into adults they need to develop these skills. Many times one must force or micromanage the time of the adolescent to assist them in regulating themselves. This “Tip” will explore “self regulation” for older children and adolescents, giving examples of what things need to be regulated. The hope is that if you schedule most things for them, they will learn over time to do it for themselves. Time management, organization, daily habits all need to be regulated. If adolescents will begin working on these issues, with the help of their parents they can make the transition to adulthood much easier.

**Daily routines are very important.** Without daily routines our bodies lose the stability and equilibrium that we need. Sleep, eating habits and exercise all are extremely important for our bodies and need to be regulated.

- **SLEEP:** To maintain our hormone balance, bedtime needs to be close to the same time every night. Staying up until 2-3 in the morning, then sleeping until noon only upsets our hormonal balance. This balance regulates mood and the ability to be happy. Maintain a night time routine. Staying up late because one likes to, is in contradiction to self regulation. Self regulation is about forcing yourself to get to bed at a reasonable time, not because you want to, but because it is the right thing to do.
- **DIET:** It is just as important to regulate your diet so that you eat good food. You should not skip meals, nor should you eat too much. Learning to regulate your diet is important for long term health. Our mental health is always better if we regulate ourselves as well. A various diet including 3-5 servings of fruits and vegetables, one milk group and one protein (meat) daily, is essential.
- **EXERCISE:** Our bodies need regular exercise. Once sleeps better, one has a better mood and in



- general one feels better. This is all part of “self regulation.” Finding the time several days a week to exercise always helps clear your mind and allows one to think better.

Management of time for homework and chores also is vital. Providing time every day to do our work needed for school will assist them in complying with the needs of the school for their education. Every child needs to take on an active role in the running of the house; again providing time will assist your child to become successful.

We cannot forget **free time** and **play time**. For children and adolescents it is extremely important that time is provided for them to do as they wish.

Not everything can be scheduled, and we all need to learn to be able to live in the moment so to speak, however if we assist them in developing the skills to regulate themselves, when situations arise they will be more equipped to alter their daily routine to match their desires.

Below is an example of daily schedule for a typical school day:

- 6:45 a.m. Up (having them set their own alarm clock is key)
- 7:00 a.m. Clean up, dress and make their bed
- 7:15 a.m. Breakfast
- 7:30 a.m. Brush teeth
- 7:40 a.m. Catch bus for school
- 8:10 a.m. School day begins
- 3:00 p.m. School day ends, catch bus
- 3:25 p.m. Arrive home
- 3:30 p.m. Snack
- 3:45 p.m. Free Time
- 4:45 p.m. Chores
- 5:00 p.m. Soccer practice
- 6:15 p.m. Dinner
- 6:45 p.m. Free time
- 7:00 p.m. Homework
- 7:25 p.m. Break
- 7:35 p.m. Complete home work
- 8:00 p.m. Family time/ Free time
- 9:30 p.m. Bed time routine begins
- 9:45 p.m. In Bed

This is a very specific example of what one might set up. Many children might not need this specific of a schedule. Other children and adolescents may need more detailed schedules to learn the idea of self regulation. Over time these things become habits and writing down schedules is not necessary.

Let’s not forget that the idea of self regulation is for the adolescent to learn that they are capable of



getting everything done they need completed in that day without parents nagging them. This is the transition from being a child to being an adult. Empowering our adolescents is one of the best gifts we can give them.

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