

## How You Can Help Children and Teens with FASD Develop Routines

Routines are important in everyone's life. Understanding that we do specific things at certain times everyday helps keep us organized. Knowing what time the school bus comes on school mornings or what time we go to bed helps us feel secure because we know what to do.

Children and Teens with FASD have a hard time being organized. Parents or caregivers can help them by creating routines. Routines will help a child learn good habits. A child with FASD may never fully understand why it's important to brush and floss their teeth everyday, but what is important is that they develop the good routine of brushing and flossing their teeth everyday.

Visual aids that show routines are very helpful. A chart with pictures of what a child needs to do can help the child see the steps needed to complete an activity. For example, a visual chart in the bathroom could include pictures of washing their face and hands, brushing and flossing their teeth, combing their hair, and putting on deodorant.

Verbal prompts, when used with visual aids, can really help children and teens understand the routines of their day.

### Example # 1:

Every morning Brad has trouble getting ready for school. When he goes to his room to get dressed, he needs to be called several times to hurry up and get ready for school. He forgets to brush his teeth and wash his face. Then he can't find his school bag. The more the parent or caregiver tries to hurry Brad along the more stressed and upset he gets. Brad often leaves for school in tears.

#### What is happening

To get ready for school, Brad needs to do many things. He doesn't have a routine, so he is very unorganized. He knows he needs to get ready and out the door by 8:40 a.m., but can't understand all the steps needed to get him organized. Brad shows his confusion and frustration by becoming loud or angry, maybe even aggressive. He may even shut down because he feels so overwhelmed by everything, that he can't do anything.

#### What you can do

With your child, make a plan of what needs to be done to get ready for school. The night before school, help him pack his book bag and get his clothes ready. Some children like to lay their clothes out in the order the clothes go on. This activity helps them stay on track when they are getting dressed. A toaster on the counter with the bread, butter, and jam beside it, or a cereal bowl and spoon on the table will remind him what he is having for breakfast. Pictures of his bathroom routine will help him to leave home clean and neat.

## FASD Tip #15

### Developed by:

FASD Support Network  
Of Saskatchewan  
510 Cynthia Street  
Saskatoon, SK S7L 7K7

Phone for free:  
1-866-673-3276  
In Saskatoon call: 975-0884  
E-mail:  
fasdnetwork@sasktel.net  
Website:  
www.skfasnetwork.ca

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and use these sheets.

## **Some Tips to Help Use Routines in Daily Activities:**

1. Decide which parts of your day need routines. Some ideas are wake up and bedtime routines, mealtime routines, when to watch TV, play, or do chores. Simple routines like sitting in the same seat at the table or in the car are important.
2. It is important for parents and caregivers to have routines in their own lives if they want to help children with FASD develop routines. Adults who have good routines have more energy to teach children how to develop good routines and habits.
3. Keep routines simple and basic. Develop routines that build on your child's strengths.
4. Think and plan ahead. Think about what could go wrong and make changes to the environment. For example, it can be noisy and confusing for a child when the entry bell rings at school. Having an adult routinely meet the child with FASD at the door to lead them through the maze of children to their classroom can be helpful.
5. When asking your child or teen to do something use the same plain and simple phrase each time, "Sandra, time to get ready for bed."
6. Teach the steps of a task in the same order every time. For example when doing the dishes, teach the child to use 3 steps: scrape, rinse, and wash in hot soapy water. Your child may not understand why they should scrape the food off the plate, but we know it's a good way to do dishes.
7. For some children the first way they learn something is the only way they can successfully do something. Always plan for the future when you teach a child with FASD a new skill. They may not be able to change a routine once it is locked in their brain.
8. Routines help children and teens with FASD to succeed and feel good about their life.