

# PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DAILY ROUTINES

Rebecca Foster, OTD, OTR/L

Occupational Therapist and Early Interventionist

Minot Infant Development Program

North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities

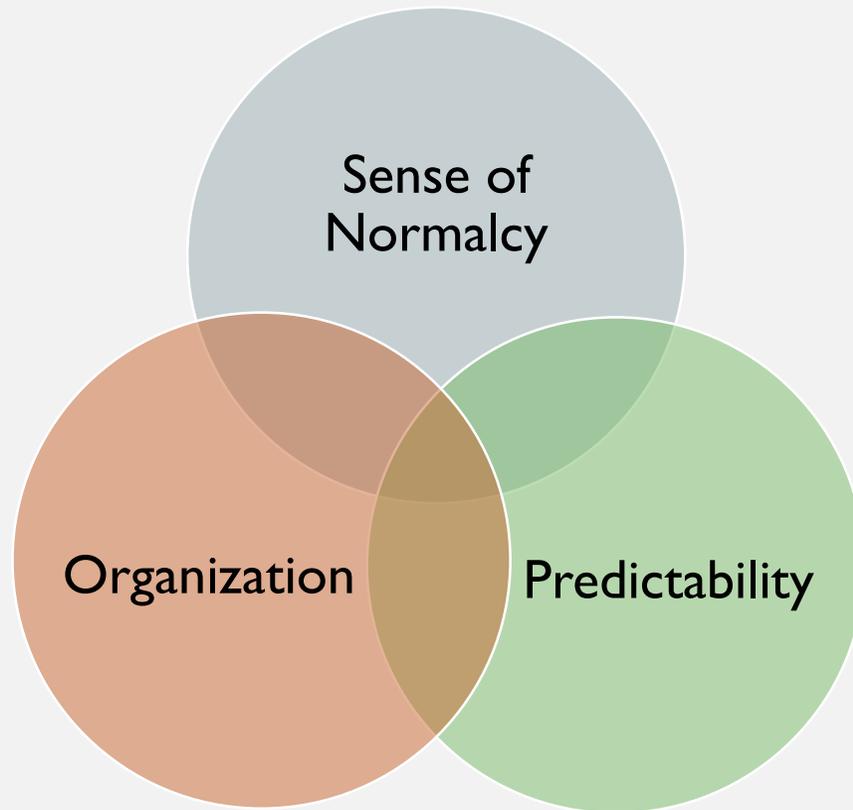
## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Participants will learn why daily routine activities are tools to support developmental skills.
- Participants will learn strategies to apply specifically to mealtime, dressing, sleep, chores, homework, and play/leisure activities.
- Participants will be provided examples of tools that can be used, and a list of resources.

## WHY ARE ROUTINES IMPORTANT

- Research shows that routines can improve the health and well-being of both children and parents.
- Routines provide a sense of safety and security.





- Routines meet basic needs, provide stability and order in a child's daily life.
- Routines help strengthen relationships between a foster child and their foster family.
- Routines can reduce the negative impact of chaotic environments, poverty, and chronic health conditions. (Helton et al., 2018)

# ROUTINES: FLEXIBLE, REFLECTIVE, AND INTUITIVE

AS YOU DEVELOP ROUTINES, RECOGNIZE THAT WHAT WORKS FOR ONE CHILD  
MAY NOT WORK FOR ANOTHER

- Understand that because of trauma and/or neglect, the child's emotional skills may be lower than their physical age...adjust expectations. (Helton et al., 2018)
- Anticipate a period of disarray.
- Boundaries and routines may be a new experience and may feel more restrictive than the chaotic environment the child is coming from.
- Teach new rules and expectations while expecting the child to test their new boundaries.
- Be aware that as you are teaching new routines, differences in expectations may cause jealousy in the other children of the household.

# MEALTIME

AS MANY AS 80% OF CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS  
HAVE FEEDING DIFFICULTIES (JOHNSON, 2017)

We want to go from this....



To this.



Mealtime is a space and time to connect and develop family cohesion.

It is a time to teach social skills and family roles.

It is an opportunity to guide child behavior through modeling.



## MEALTIME STRATEGIES

- Plan to have meals and snacks at about the same time every day. (Helton et al., 2018; AOTA, 2014)
- Provide food every 2.5 to 3 hours for young children, and only offer water between meals and snacks. This will ensure they are hungry at mealtime.
- When introducing new foods, do not make it a pressure situation. Provide at least one food choice they will eat, and provide new foods for them to smell, touch, taste, without a lot of pressure to eat it on the first try.
- Many children will need to try a new food multiple times before accepting it into their repertoire of foods.



## MEALTIME STRATEGIES



- Involve kids in meal planning and meal preparation, if possible.
- Take a new foster child shopping so they can show you the foods they are familiar with eating.
- Involve the child/children in chores related to mealtime, such as setting and clearing the table, or helping with dishes if they are older. Even a small child can place napkins on the table.
- Provide choices when possible, to avoid conflict. (i.e. “Would you like to put away the leftover food or load the dishwasher?”). Choices are appropriate to use with both young and older children.

# DRESSING

- Violet: (Crying hysterically)
- Bethany: Violet, what's wrong? Why are you so upset?
- Violet: Because I can't get this shirt to work!
- Bethany: Violet, honey... You can't get the shirt to work because they are pants!
- [https://www.boredpanda.com/cute-funny-quotes-kids-little-hoots/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=organic](https://www.boredpanda.com/cute-funny-quotes-kids-little-hoots/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic)



# DRESSING STRATEGIES

- Use a systematic approach
- Use First/Then language
- Break down tasks into smaller tasks or sequences (i.e. First pull down pants; Then sit on floor; Next pull pants over feet, etc.).
- More sequencing: lay clothes out in the order the child should put them on.
- Be patient: it takes a long time to master dressing skills AND takes a long time to do the task when learning.

- First Things First: children usually learn to undress first.
- Allow time to practice when the family is not in a rush, such as at the end of the day, on the weekends, etc.
- Allow choices as much as possible (e.g. offer choices between two outfits; red shirt or blue shirt; put on pants or shirt first, etc.)
- Observe for sensitivities to clothing textures, tags, etc. if there are behaviors around dressing.
- (Hayton, Wall, & Dimitriou, 2018)

## FUN WAYS TO PRACTICE DRESSING



- Practice on dolls or stuffed animals
- Use play jewelry and dress-up clothes to practice (Bracelets and necklaces should be supervised for safety).
- Cut old socks or t-shirts into strips to make loops or stretchy bands. Practice pulling the loops/bands over feet, legs, head, etc. to work on the motor skills and body awareness needed for dressing.
- Use stickers to practice body parts and to teach the child to reach for tricky areas, like pulling pants up at the back.
- Play games with clothespins or small salad tongs, to work on the child's grip strength for pulling up pants and socks.

**SLEEP:**  
AVERAGE AMOUNTS REQUIRED PER DAY  
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Newborns (0-3 months): 14-17 hours
- Infants (4-11 months): 12-15 hours
- Toddlers (1-2 years): 11-14 hours
- Preschoolers (3-5 years): 10-13 hours
- School-aged Children (6-13 years): 9-11 hours
- Teenagers (14-17 years): 8-10 hours
- Young Adults (18-25 years): 7-9 hours

(National Sleep Foundation, 2019)

# BEDTIME STRATEGIES

- Establish a specific bedtime and a bedtime routine. You may need to adjust the child's bedtime to find out how much sleep the child requires, and what bedtime works well with both the evening and morning routines. (Helton et al., 2018; AOTA, 2013)
- Try to keep the bedtime as consistent as possible, even on weekends and vacations.
- Develop a sequence of activities and use First/Then language. Use a picture schedule if needed to help the child follow the routine. (e.g. First Bath, Then Pajamas...teeth brushing, potty, books, etc.).
- Find a comfort item that the child can hold during reading time and then take to bed, like a stuffed animal or blanket.
- Avoid any electronics during the hour or two before bedtime; research shows that this can interfere with the brain's ability to achieve good sleep patterns.

## BEDTIME STRATEGIES

Consider sensory experiences that can impact sleep:

- Fabric of pajamas, sheets or blankets
- Temperature
- Lighting
- Smells
- Sounds



# CHORES

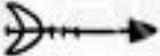
- Chores are a way to complete daily tasks and teach responsibility. (Helton et al., 2018)
- Establish the expectation that everyone on the household takes part in chores.
- Create a chore schedule for the children that lists expectations; rotate responsibilities.
- Develop a system that works for your household: a white board that shows a week at a time or month at a time and list chores, using a different color for each child; a written chore schedule to hang on the refrigerator; a small white board for each to have in their room that tells them their daily chores, etc.
- Model the behaviors expected; praise the child for task completion and independent follow-through.
- Teach the task, using the same sequencing method; use pictures of the task sequence if needed.
- Consider having older children help care for younger children as one of their chores (e.g. read with younger children while a parent cooks supper; care for younger children while parent shops for groceries, etc.).

MY WEEK

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY



# VISUAL SUPPORTS FOR ROUTINES

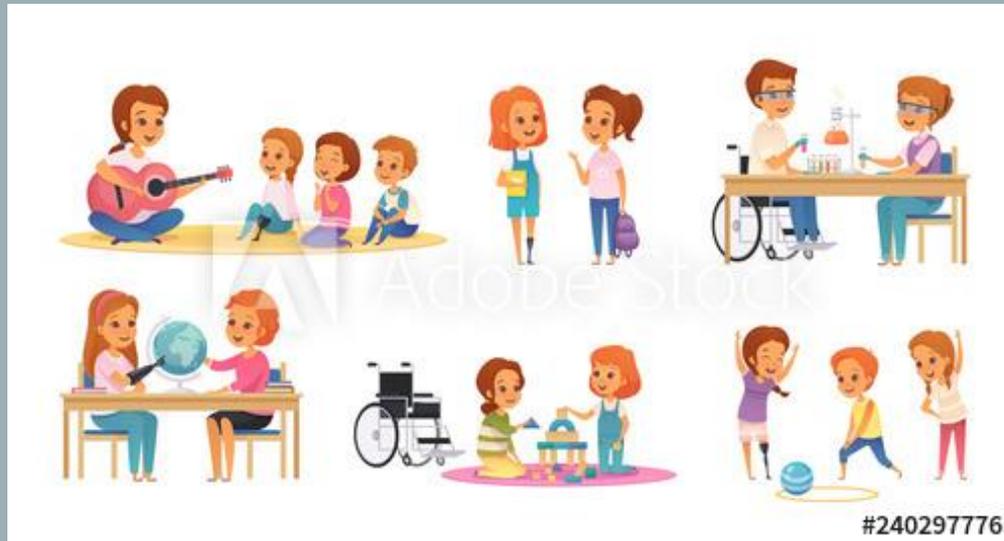
White boards, sticky notes, checklists,  
picture routines

# HOMEWORK

- Create an organized work space that is free of clutter and visual distractions. Provide good lighting (AOTA, n.d.)
- Before starting homework provide a movement break or alerting snack (i.e. crunchy, chewing foods, foods with strong flavors); this will provide neurological organization.
- Prepare a checklist or “to-do” list for what needs to be completed (this may be available through the child’s student planner from school).
- Break it down into achievable tasks; use folders to divide homework into smaller chunks and then have the child do a certain number of tasks before taking a break.
- Set a timer for the amount of time needed to work before taking a break. Providing breaks supports attention and concentration. You could try the 20/20/20 rule: take a break every 20 minutes, break for 20 seconds, look at least 20 feet away from homework or computer.
- Provide an incentive or motivation for completing homework.
- Work with the child’s classroom teacher on appropriate expectations for homework.

# PLAY AND LEISURE

- Play is considered "a child's work."
- Play can be healing for children suffering from trauma.
- Play can reduce stress and help make sense of difficult experiences.
- Play can support building relationships with others.
- Play supports social skills, turn-taking, modeling empathy, etc. (Ayling & Stringer, 2013).
  
- For the older child, leisure activities are important and participation is the goal.
- Participation is considered an important part of human functioning, with a holistic view of the person (WHO, 2002).
- Participation in leisure activities can reduce chronic health risks, especially for children at-risk due to a disability or mental health challenge (Shields et al, 2014).



# SENSORY PLAY

- Play with messy textures, such as water, mud, paint, foam soap, slime, food, etc.
- Play with dry textures, such as sand, dried beans, peas, lentils, uncooked rice, sidewalk chalk, etc.
- Play with moldable textures, such as playdough, moon sand, clay, etc.
- Other: water beads
- \* Use caution based on the child's age to ensure safety!

- Sensory play provides an opportunity for a child to learn about their senses. This may be a new experience for a child who has known sensory deprivation due to neglect. (Ayling & Stringer, 2013)
- It increases the child's awareness of their physical self, and can increase sensory/emotional regulation as the child discovers what is calming or alerting for them.
- It can provide opportunity to practice fine motor and bilateral coordination skills needed for self-care, such as scooping, pouring, stirring, rotating the wrist or using pincer grasp to manipulate textures.

## MORE SENSORY PLAY

Movements that provide work to the muscles and joints can have a calming, organizing effect on the nervous system.

- Jumping on a trampoline
- Swinging
- Running
- Riding a bicycle
- Going down a slide
- Playing catch
- Climbing on structures
- Monkey bars
- Push-ups on floor or against the wall
- Animal walks (bear walk, crab walk, frog jump, bunny hop, snake slither/arm crawl)
- Wheelbarrow walk
- Pushing/Pulling heavy objects (i.e. lifting weights; exercise bands)
- Building projects, e.g. hammering

# IMAGINATIVE PLAY

- Child uses symbols of real life objects to engage in play (e.g. Small cup or bowl for kitchen play; toy lion for lion at the zoo, etc.).
- Supports the child shifting their focus to the outside world away from an internal focus.
- Can provide opportunity to rehearse or relive experiences that are difficult for the child to process.
- A child who has experienced trauma may re-enact experiences repetitively. If this is distressing, this may be a sign that the child would benefit from play therapy.
- As the child expands their pretend play skills they are able to imagine themselves in another person's shoes. This is a good opportunity to model social skills and teach empathy.
- It is a time when the child may progress toward becoming more playful, learning how to tease or joke, engaging in humor.
- Ayling & Stringer, 2013

## PLAY TO SUPPORT COMMUNICATION SKILLS



- You can respond to a child’s play in a way that promotes relationship and emotional connection.
- Say what you see (e.g. “The cars are crashing into each other;” “The baby is crying.”)
- Name the feeling (e.g. “The baby is scared...the dog is hungry...happy, etc.”)
- Label objects and model simple phrases during play to support development of vocabulary.
- Play through interactive books, songs, and rhymes; engage in action songs and songs with repetitive lines (e.g. Wheels on the Bus, Old MacDonald, Head-Shoulders-Knees-and-Toes). Pause to allow the child an opportunity to fill in the familiar phrase.

## LEISURE ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT YOUTH AT-RISK

- Provide activities that promote stress management, health literacy, coping strategies (e.g. yoga, exercise groups, cooking classes, art/music/drama). (Arbesman, Bazyk, & Nochajski, 2013)
- Art programs, especially the performance arts (e.g. drama) have shown to be effective for social skills and improving social interaction.
- After-school programs, especially those that include physical activity are beneficial.
- Skill-based groups may reduce involvement with the legal system (e.g. martial arts).
- Social Skills groups: there is strong evidence that these groups can improve attention, peer interaction, pro-social behaviors, while decreasing aggressive, delinquent, and anti-social behaviors in at-risk children and adolescents.
- Play groups for children who have been abused or neglected can improve play skills, self-esteem, and positive feelings.
- Life skills and social skills groups for children with intellectual or developmental delays can improve functional life skills, conversation turn-taking, social skills, self-management, and decrease problem behaviors.

# SUMMARY

- Routines are important to provide foster children with a sense of safety and security.
- Routines provide opportunity to teach developmentally-appropriate daily living skills.
- Routines support building relationships and social skills.
- By incorporating routines into every part of the day you can bring a sense of order and predictability to the child's world.
- Time management is important so using tools such as calendars, white boards, task sequences, etc. can help everyone in the family to follow the routines.
- As important as routines are, flexibility, reflection, and intuition are just as important in order to meet the complex needs of each child.

**Resources:**

Morning Routine Tip Sheet from the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)

<https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/Morning%20Routine%20Tip%20Sheet.pdf>

Bedtime Routine Tip Sheet from the AOTA

<https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/BedroomRoutineTipSheet.pdf>

Bath Time Routine Tip Sheet from the AOTA

<https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/BathTimeTipSheet.PDF>

Toileting Routine Tip Sheet from the AOTA

<https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/Establishing-Toileting-Routines-for-Children-Tip-Sheet.pdf>

Mealtime Routine Tip Sheet from the AOTA

<https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/Establishing-Mealtime-Routines-for-Children-Tip-Sheet.pdf>

Homework Tip Sheet from the AOTA

<https://www.aota.org/~media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/consumers/Youth/Schools/OT%20Tips%20for%20Homework%20Success>

## **Resources Continued...**

School Tips for Parents: Academic Success and Social Participation from the AOTA

<https://www.aota.org/About-Occupational-Therapy/Patients-Clients/ChildrenAndYouth/School-Tips-Academic-Success-Social-Participation.aspx>

Chore Charts

[https://www.google.com/search?rlz=|C5CHFA\\_enUS8|US8|&q=free+chore+chart+template&tbm=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjgk7nkxe\\_iAhUEX60KHbNMAzkQsAR6BAgFEAE&biw=1279&bih=622](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=|C5CHFA_enUS8|US8|&q=free+chore+chart+template&tbm=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjgk7nkxe_iAhUEX60KHbNMAzkQsAR6BAgFEAE&biw=1279&bih=622)

CDC's Developmental Milestones (Checklists, Milestone Tracker App, etc.)

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

Dr. Canapari—blog with information on sleep training

<https://drcraigcanapari.com/>

OT blog with information to support eating challenges

<https://yourkidstable.com/>

## References

Arbesman, M., Bazyk, S., & Nochajski, S. M. (2013). Systematic review of occupational therapy and mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention for children and youth. *American Occupational Therapy Association*, 67, e120-e130. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2013.008359>

Ayling, P. & Stringer, B. (2013). Supporting carer-child relationships through play: A model for teaching carers how to use play skills to strengthen attachment relationships. *Adoption & Fostering*, 37(2), 130–143. doi: 10.1177/0308575913490383

J. Hayton, K. Wall & D. Dimitriou. (2018). Get your coat: examining the development of independent dressing skills in young children with visual impairment, Down syndrome and typically developing children. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. doi: 10.1080/13603116.2018.1456568 To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1456568>

Helton, J. J., Schreiber, J. C., Wiley, J., Schweitzer, R. (2018). Finding a routine that works: A mixed-method study of foster parents. *Child & Family Social Work*, 23, 248–255. doi: 10.1111/cfs.12412

Johnson, L. (2017). Poster Session: Occupational performance coaching for parents of picky eaters. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71, 7111515245p1. doi:10.5014/ajot.2017.71SI-PO4147

National Sleep Foundation. (2019). How much sleep do babies and kids need? Retrieved from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/excessive-sleepiness/support/how-much-sleep-do-babies-and-kids-need>

Semanchin Jones, A., Rittner, B., & Affronti, M. (2016). Foster parent strategies to support the functional adaptation of foster youth. *Journal of Public Welfare*, 10 (3), 255-273. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2016.1148092>

Shields, N., King, M., Corbett, M., & Imms, C. (2014). Is participation among children with intellectual disabilities in outside school activities similar to their typically developing peers? *Developmental Neurorehabilitation*, 17(1), 64-71. doi: 10.3109/17518423.2013.836256

World Health Organization. (2002). *Towards a common language for functioning, disability, and health: ICF*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/classifications/icf/icfbeginnersguide.pdf?ua=1>