

Consultants' Corner: **Creating Smooth Daily Routines**

Getting out of the house in the morning without drama or putting little ones to bed at night without tears can feel like a huge accomplishment! Children's temperaments contribute to how they react when the pressure is on, but what can we do as parents to increase our odds of success in these daily routines?

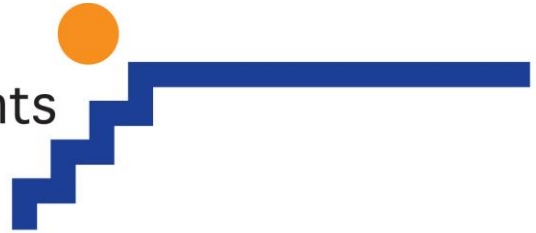
- **Use visuals!** Words are fleeting with these new language users, so add a concrete clue to help them understand your expectation. A visual schedule, showing the steps of the routine either with icons, drawings or best, photos of them doing each step is one option. For our toddlers, give them something they need in the next place they're going: hand over a clean diaper, bath towel, toothbrush, or jammies. They know where things belong, and will be more inclined to take that item to its proper place, and voila! They are where you need them to be.
- **Be consistent!** Do things in the same order every time so they know what to expect. When they can predict what is happening next- and they are correct- they are less anxious and more confident.
- **Give choices within parameters.** Children love to be in control! Set the parameter but offer a choice within that: "It is time for pajamas. Do you want the trucks or the striped ones?" And if he comes back with a third option, as long as it is within the set parameters, great! Go with it.
- **Be empathetic.** When children feel understood, their escalating emotions often subside a little bit. Acknowledge feelings: "I see you're mad, but its time to clean up." If using a visual schedule, blame the schedule! "I know you hate brushing teeth but look, it is next on the list so let's hurry up and do it so we can get to storybooks!" Point to the pictures as you talk about them.
- **Give warnings and use a timer.** Children never respond well to abrupt transitions. Give a 3 or 5-minute warning before ending desirable activities. Set a timer to help everyone keep track of how much longer there is. When the timer rings, call the child's attention to it so that they engage in remembering what it represents: "What do you hear? What does it mean?"
- **Follow through!** When the timer rings, stop writing that email and go engage with your child. When you call to your children to do something, be present (physically go to them) to help them get started.



For more information and examples of picture schedules, see the following links (and don't be alarmed if they reference special needs – many strategies for atypical learners are very effective with ALL learners!)

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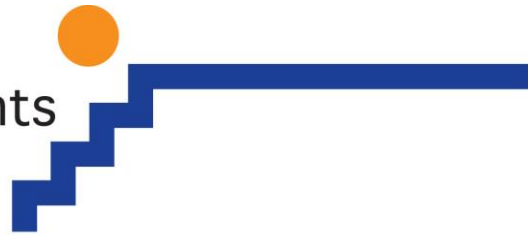


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<https://www.schkidules.com/store/>

https://www.amazon.com/First-Then-Schedule-Independence-Structure-Community/dp/B0865VNH2Q/ref=asc_df_B0865VNH2Q/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=475810566402&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=658483835748607834&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvgmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007768&hvtargid=pla-1186737380305&th=1

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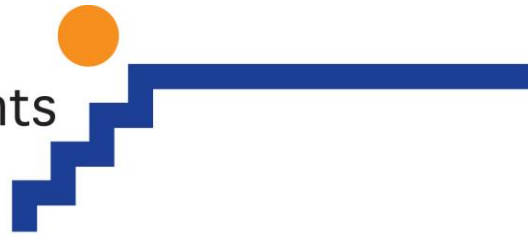
Consultants' Corner: **Managing Tantrums**

Nothing is more unpleasant than a young child having a raging, out-of-control, LOUD tantrum – especially when it is our child, and especially when others (in the house, in the checkout line behind us, etc) are bearing witness to how we are “managing” said child. Regardless of how we got there (and we can spend a whole column on prevention strategies), what do we do *now* when our child is in the throws of an epic tantrum?

- **Make sure the area is safe:** nothing s/he can throw, topple, kick including younger siblings and pets.
- **Don't talk!** They can't process what you're saying anyway and anything you do say will just add fuel to the fire because it is one more incoming stimuli that they cannot handle.
- **Pick a mantra** if you are compelled to speak, and repeat it as needed, calmly and quietly such as: “When you're calm, we'll talk” or “Calm body first.” Name the behavior you want to see.
- **Breathe deeply** and focus on staying calm yourself.
- **Remember this isn't personal!** They're not trying to drive you crazy: It is hard to be them sometimes. Repeat to yourself: “My child is really struggling right now.”
- **If you've identified a calm place, point to it** (silently) to remind the child that that is where s/he goes when upset. (This place should be identified collaboratively with your 3 ½ yr old or older child in a calm moment by reflecting together on where they like to go – backyard, behind couch, bedroom, etc).

For more information, check out: <https://www.janetlansbury.com/> and her book *No Bad Kids: Toddler Discipline Without Shame* for little ones, and Dr. Ross Greene's work including *The Explosive Child* and *Raising Human Beings* for our preschoolers and beyond. <https://drrossgreene.com/> Both authors also have podcasts and other resources on their websites.

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Consultants Corner: **Strategies to Help Your Picky Eater**

Mealtimes should be simple, enjoyable, and healthy. Whenever possible make dinner a family affair. Include your child in the preparation and clean-up of dinner as often as you can. When children help make the food, they are more likely to eat it. Including children in meal planning and preparation can pique their interest and appetites. Preschoolers are quite capable of clearing their own dishes and helping to set the table.

Have consistent expectations at meals. Give choices within parameters (“You need to eat something green. Do you want broccoli or peas?”) Don’t allow grazing. Plan a well-balanced meal for your family, knowing at least two items will appeal to your young child. Encourage your child to try a bite of something new, no pressure, just a taste. Remember to keep reintroducing foods. A preschooler may not like English peas one week, but after helping shell them, may be willing to try them again next month. Never assume, continue to provide opportunities to taste.

A healthy dessert is often part of an evening meal. Often children will be willing to eat a healthy dessert such as fruit if you include a novel element such as yogurt for dipping, kids’ chopsticks to pick up cut up pieces of fruit or yogurt eaten in an ice cream cone. Have small dessert bowls you regularly use for portion control. Dessert can be offered if a good effort has been made eating at mealtimes.

Tips for Mealtimes and Healthy Eating:

- Try to have fairly consistent mealtimes.
- Carefully plan for snacks. *Nothing takes away the motivation for eating more than never feeling hungry.*
- A healthy breakfast gets a child off to a good start. Sometimes parents need to think ‘outside the box’ to encourage healthy eating. If your child doesn’t like to eat a lot in the morning, consider a yogurt/fruit smoothie with a fun straw. A turkey sandwich can be a fine choice for breakfast. In fact, it can be the beginning of an “upside down day’ that culminates in breakfast for dinner.
- Read stories about foods can help children develop an interest in new foods. Reading [Blueberries for Sal](#) may prompt a trip to pick blueberries at a farm and a discussion about whether they can be made into pancakes or eaten in a fruit salad.
- When children have difficulties with eating or eat a very limited number of foods, seek the advice of your pediatrician.

On a final note:

Learning to eat a variety of foods takes a lot of practice. Family mealtimes provide regular opportunities to explore new foods, develop self-help skills as well as expand communication skills and solidify family bonds.

Resources:

[Blueberries for Sal](#) by Robert McClosky

[Raising a Healthy, Happy Eater](#) by V. Fernando, MD and M. Potock, MA, CCC-SLP

[Super Food](#) by Haley Harmon

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Consultants Corner: **Top Tips for a Successful Playdate**

Play with peers helps develop social and emotional skills in early childhood. Learning to communicate, play, and develop friendships is an important life skill. Some children learn to socialize with other children easily while others need more support and systematic practice to learn to make friends. One of the best ways parents can facilitate social skill development is to invite another on a playdate.

Why Have a Playdate?

Although preschool and childcare provides group early learning experiences, preschoolers also benefit from one-to-one play with a peer. A preschool is a sensory-rich environment, and some children can be easily overwhelmed with the noise and tumult of a classroom. Many young children more fully enjoy the early childhood classroom once they have had some playdates with classmates.

Also, children are a curious mix of strengths and skills. A child may be a whiz on the playground equipment but need support to share toys or communicate effectively. Having a playdate can help both children continue to develop motor, communication and play skills. For example, one may more readily attempt going down the slide if a peer ventures down it first. Tasting a new food, playing a novel game, or exploring a sandbox may all be accomplished more easily if a peer leads the way.

Top Tips for a Successful Playdate:

- Invite a classmate to play. You can have the playdate wherever you are most comfortable including parks and playgrounds. You may ask your child's teacher for suggestions.
- Sometimes you may invite a child who shares similar interests with your child. At other times you may extend the invitation to a child who has different strengths than your own. For example, with some adult facilitation, you may help the child who loves dramatic play join forces with the child who has amazing playground skills.
- Stay in close proximity to the children because it is difficult to get back on track when children have experienced difficulties. Some children need adult facilitation and support to play with friends, particularly if they are new friends. As the play evolves the adult will facilitate less and can stay in the background, ready to provide assistance as necessary.
- A planned playdate is a successful one. Read books about friends and the challenges that arise. Talk to your child about what will happen when the friend arrives. Talk to your child about taking turns to pick the next activity. Have several different types of activities in mind and then follow the children's lead. Add motor activities to your play by using hula hoops, bikes or wagons. The children can take turns pulling each other in a wagon. Consider collaborative art such as one drawing with sidewalk chalk and the other squirting the chalk images with water to make the colors pop!
- Take pictures of the playdate. Make a copy for both children so they can talk about it and share the experience with other family members.

Playing with friends can be a daunting task for the young child, especially post-pandemic. With your support and some well-organized playdates, the good times will roll!

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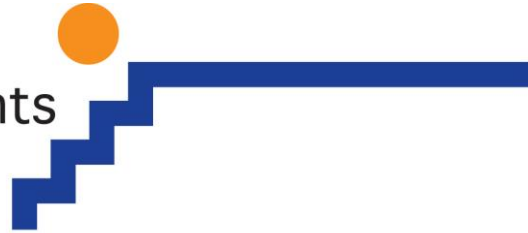
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Books about Friendship:

- Emma's Friendwich by Stuart Murphy
- How to Be a Friend by Laurie and Marc Brown
- I Can Help by David Hyde Costello
- What Would Danny Do by Adir Levy (series, older preschoolers, early school age)

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Consultants Corner: **What is Self-Regulation?**

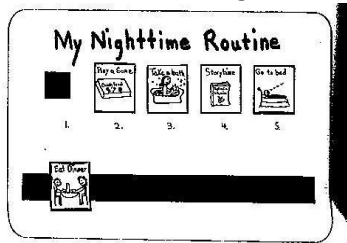
Parents and educators often ask how they can help their young children develop self-control, pay attention, and follow directions at home and in the classroom. First, what is self-regulation? It is simply a child's ability to attend to a task or situation with appropriate body control and awareness. This includes everything from sitting to eat a meal or playing with toys with peers to calming themselves when upset, or calming to fall asleep. Infants learn that a parent's soft voice or rocking helps them calm. Toddlers then learn that routine and it helps them feel in control. Preschoolers learn that if they sit calmly during circle, they are able to participate in the group learning.

Why does my child need to self-regulate? Self-regulation is a *process* and learning to self-regulate helps a child feel in control of themselves and better able to control impulses and emotions.

What does it look like when my child is dysregulated? At any given time, children may experience dysregulation. When a child is sick or there is a major change in their schedule, we often see more disrupted behavior. Dysregulation may look like: difficulty remaining focused, a shorter attention span, trouble transitioning from one activity to another, or even a lack of body awareness (frequently bumping into things and appearing clumsy). A child who has trouble falling asleep independently or calming down when upset can be particularly frustrating examples of dysregulation for parents.

How to help your child self-regulate more effectively:

- Provide them with a consistent schedule for eating and sleeping.
- Make home schedules with pictures until they can read: Review what has happened and what is going to happen. Show the steps and allow your child to remove the pictures. This helps them understand what is going to happen next and what they need to do, and is particularly great for bedtime and morning routines!



- Give warnings when a transition will occur, set a timer. Ask your child to repeat back what will happen when the timer goes off to be sure they "heard" your message.
- Teach Calm breathing: use videos such as Daniel Tiger's song: "When you Feel so Mad that you want to Roar" or Sesame Street's "Belly Breathe" sung by Elmo and Colbie Caillat.
- Try deep breathing using props:
 - Blow bubbles gently to create bubbles
 - Use pinwheels
 - Use a feather and blow it off your hand or table

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- Practice “Balloon” breathing: Fill your belly like a big balloon over a count of 4 and then breath out; repeat. See the You Tube video “Two Minutes of Mindfulness: Balloon Breaths”
- When your child becomes dysregulated, stay calm, model deep breathing, and talk less!

Help a child calm and stay self-regulated by doing activities that provide proprioceptive (deep pressure into the muscles and joints) and vestibular input (to their movement system).

Activities that calm by providing proprioceptive input:

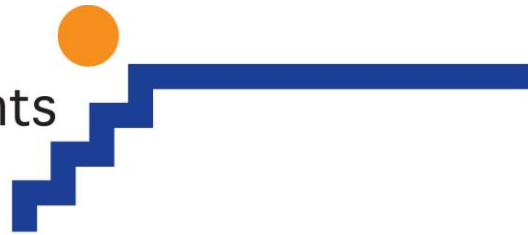
- Carry heavy items
- Push and pull weighted wagons or carts
- Wheelbarrow walks and animal walks
- Wall push-ups
- Provide pressure to your child with pillows or blankets (make a “sandwich” or “burrito”)
- Play with resistive materials such as playdough, therapy putty, silly putty
- Drink from a straw (try smoothies)
- Provide items to chew such as a chew tube and or gum

Activities that provide vestibular input:

- Ride a bike/tricycle or scooter before school (to give active movement before sitting!)
- Swinging, if swings are not available use a blanket or swing in a hammock
- Rocking chairs and rocking horses
- Gentle bouncing on an exercise ball
- Jump in bounce houses, mattresses, foam nuggets and mini trampolines with a bar

Resources: www.Childmind.org (The Child Mind Institute); [Self-Regulation Interventions and Strategies](#) by Teresa Garland; [Self Reg](#) by Dr. Stuart Shanker; <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/> search self-regulation for assorted articles and podcast episodes.

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Consultants Corner: **What is sensory processing?**

Sensory processing or sensory integration refers to how a child processes incoming sensory information. How well children process sensory information affects their ability to follow routines, tolerate groups, play, and regulate emotions, for example.

Sensory integration is the neurological process by which sensation (such as touch, sight, sound, smell, taste, movement and input received through the muscles and joints) are organized for our use. When our nervous system is able to process and integrate information from all the senses appropriately, we are able to interact with the world in an adaptive and skillful manner. It is the way the brain receives, organizes and responds to sensory input in order to behave in a meaningful and consistent manner. Challenges in sensory integration and modulation show up in a variety of ways and can influence a child's motor skills, learning, behavior and emotional regulation.

When children are efficient in their processing, they make appropriate responses to the environment around them. They master skills, behave predictably, pay attention and show good self-regulation skills (they control their physical activity, emotional and cognitive responses). Children can sit and attend to the important pieces of information in a classroom and therefore have a good chance at achieving their academic potential. Furthermore, children are able to understand their bodies' movement in relation to their surrounding and themselves. This in turn aids in social development.

All the sensory systems need to work together for efficient and effective sensory processing. There are five senses and two hidden senses: the vestibular sense (responsible for information regarding movement) and the proprioceptive sense (information from our muscle and joints). How well these 7 systems process information lead to success or frustration when attempting almost any other skill. Getting dressed, riding a bike or even reading a book requires processing many different sensations.

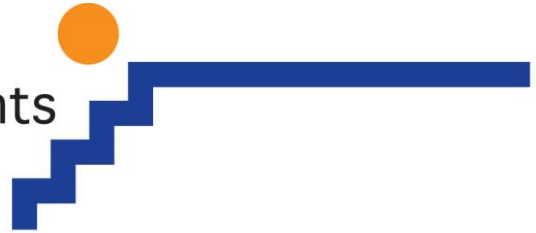
Sensory processing differences may occur when sensory signals cannot organize themselves into appropriate responses. It may affect people in only one sense, just touch, sight, or movement, or in multiple senses. One person may over-respond to the touch sensation and find clothing or unexpected touch distressing. Another might be under-responsive to stimulation such as movement (the vestibular sense) and may crave movement constantly.

Children receiving inaccurate messages from their muscle and joints (proprioceptive sense) might experience poor posture, and as a result may have trouble with gross and fine motor skills development.

Sensory processing is a normal, neurological process. We all have some "glitches" in how we interpret sensory information. Some of us may not like the feel of tags on our clothes, or we may have trouble concentrating with lots of noise around us, or dislike crowds of people when going to a mall during the holiday season. Only when challenges with sensory processing *affect function*, is it time to take a closer look. If your child demonstrates poor attention, inappropriate behavior, is overly active, or is lethargic and lacking in speed of activity, has difficulty in learning and retaining learned skills, is unable to comfortably manage crowds or group settings, shows immature social skills, or heightened anxiety, they

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may benefit from a closer look at their sensory processing systems. Discuss your concerns with your child's teacher and pediatrician to come up with a plan for further investigation.

Resources: www.AOTA.org (American Occupational Therapy Association), <https://www.siglobalnetwork.org/> (Sensory Integration Global Network), [Raising a Sensory Smart Child](#) by Lindsey Biel and Nancy Peske, [Sensational Kids](#) by Lucy Jane Miller.

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