

# What can you do before your children walk out the door to help them feel they can conquer anything?

by Jackie D. Igafo-Te'o, Bridges4Kids

Feed their mind, body and soul each and every morning. By making a few simple changes before the bus arrives, you can have a big impact on how your children handle events at school.

These no-nonsense pointers will help you remove a large portion of the last-minute stress that comes with every weekday morning.

## 1. Plan Ahead

Do your children lag behind in the morning because they can't find matching socks or their homework?

Start preparing the night before. Lay out clothing (including socks and shoes), sign all papers, pack lunches, and put everything by the door. This may sound simple but it really does cut down on morning stress and anxiety.

If your child takes medication, use a pill organizer so you know if the child has already taken the morning meds. A hectic morning could result in double-dosing. Avoid this at all costs.

## 2. Get a Good Night's Sleep

A good night's sleep can never be underestimated. Parents, this goes for you too. Lack of sleep causes health problems, job performance problems **and** stress at home.

Be firm. Set a reasonable bedtime and then let your children EARN a later bedtime based on their daily performance. For example, base bedtime could be 9:00 p.m. If the child does well that day at school and at home (no bad reports, no time outs) then they can extend to 9:30 as a reward. They may go from complaining about 9:00 p.m. to actually APPRECIATING 9:30 as an alternative.

## 3. Rise and Shine: Parents

Learn to embrace the morning. Wake up 15 minutes early and make yourself some coffee or tea. Sit on the porch in the morning air and breathe in the fresh air. A slow start will give you more patience to deal with unexpected events that come your way.

## 4. Rise and Shine: Kids

If your kids are still young (like mine) you can use a little more creativity. There was a time when getting my kids up was like awakening a couple of beasts in a cave. They'd whine "No, I'm tired" or "I just went to sleep" or "I hate morning!" -- and the list goes on.

One day, I thought I'd add a little spice to morning. I was going to let **them** control the process.

My children LOVE music so I cranked up the stereo. Within five minutes they were all up and singing along. This was a miracle! Now, we do the same ritual every morning. Loud music CAN be good for the soul.

When my kids were younger, I sang to them until they woke up. "Rise and shine lazy, sleepy head. Get your lazy bones out of the bed!" I picked a goofy song from my own childhood (Patch the Pirate) that they would surely smile about.

### **5. Time to Get a Grip**

Even kids need time to adjust to a new day. Don't wake them up with only 15 minutes to spare! This is a recipe for disaster. As parent, we usually make some time for ourselves - even during our drive to work. Remember: Kids need time to prepare for the day, too.

### **6. Talk to Them**

Use the extra time you saved by preparing ahead to talk to your children before they leave for school.

Ask what they will be doing at school that day, or if any tests are coming up. Get to know their schedule and their morning rituals. This will help to keep the channels of communication open between you.

### **7. Laugh with Them**

Laughter is something we all can indulge in -- and it doesn't cost us a thing.

Tell your children something funny before they leave for school. Even if it is something silly like reading the comics on the cereal box, in the paper, or telling them something that happened to you on the previous day - - let them know that you can laugh.

### **8. Feed Them**

Remember: garbage in = garbage out. Breakfast is the most important meal of your day. Don't skimp or skip. Your child needs nutrients in order to learn.

Make a hot breakfast. Read the ingredients on cereal boxes and make healthy choices. Make sure that something of value to your child's health is contained in your breakfast choices.

### **9. Hug Them**

As your children get older, they may be less affectionate and "touchy-feely." Don't let that stop you! Never let your child leave your home without some type of physical interaction with you.

Hug your child for a few seconds longer each morning. Tell your child that you love them. A hand on the shoulder, a high-five, a kiss and smile - - use whatever works for you and your child. Make that important contact.

You never know what the school day will bring.