

Family Routines Help Decrease Chaos And Increase Fun

by Kathy Peel

(NAPSA)—Today's families spend so much time on the go—from car pools, play dates and practice schedules to doctor appointments, work schedules and office functions—many parents feel stretched beyond their limits.

In my own quest for a smoothly running home, I discovered that the same strategies successful business managers use can tame domestic chaos. For example, by creating SOPs (standard operating procedures), families can function more efficiently—making every day easier and family life more enjoyable.

Tip-Top

Simply put, SOPs are routines that add order and serenity to a home. They promote flexibility, fun and spontaneity to family life. Here are some simple SOPs that can make a big difference in your family's day:

- Launch the day on a positive note. Simplify morning tasks by preparing the night before. Have children choose clothes and load their backpacks before bed. Build a few minutes into your morning schedule to eat breakfast together. Use this time to talk to your children about their day and what's coming up: tests, trips, special projects.

- Eliminate dry-run errands. Designate a shelf or basket near your exit door for errand items: videos and library books to be returned, purchases to take back for credit and such. Get into the



habit of checking for items when you leave the house to avoid multiple trips.

- Manage school information. Create in-boxes for each person to keep track of important information and papers. When kids return from school, have them unload their backpacks and put papers in their in-boxes. It's mom's or dad's duty to review papers each night.

- Avoid the "What's for Dinner?" issue. Let the children help you plan the weekly meals. Post the resulting weekly menu on the refrigerator door. Shop for groceries once a week and follow your list. Try to shop on Tuesdays, when store traffic is lighter.

- Schedule time together. Start a fun routine to spend quality time with your children each night doing something they enjoy, such as walking the dog after dinner, playing a quick game when homework is finished or reading a chapter from a book before bedtime.

Tasty Tip

Meal planning and cooking is a

challenge for many busy moms, including me. But today's innovations and food options make it easy to provide great-tasting, nutritious meals. Take advantage of frozen, ready-to-eat meal options and make them part of your weekly menu. Keep extras in the freezer for days when something unexpected comes up.

For example, Kid Cuisine frozen meals are an easy way for mom or dad to serve a hot, complete meal with many of the essential nutrients growing children need. The meals come in 13 kid-favorite varieties, like pizza, chicken nuggets, and mac and cheese, and children love to eat them—making mealtime happier for children and parents alike! For more information, visit www.kidcuisine.com.

When busy schedules get the best of families, it's easy to lose focus. Creating simple routines lets parents stay on top of their child's homework, spend quality family time together and keep close tabs on their children's eating habits.

- *Kathy Peel is founder and president of Family Manager, Inc., an organization dedicated to providing helpful resources to enhance family life. She is a bestselling author and contributing editor to Family Circle and has appeared on "Oprah," "Good Morning America" and many other national radio and television shows. Her latest book is "The Family Manager Saves the Day" (Perigee).*