

CRISES - LARGE AND SMALL

CURES FOR MORNING MADNESS

It's 8:20 a.m. Zero hour has arrived; it's time to leave the house for the day. In the rush to get out the door you discover: you can't find your car keys; one child has developed a major case of shoelace knots; and the other youngster needs to take to school a shoebox and a recent family photograph. You wonder: if it's too late to catch a ride with your neighbour; why you didn't buy velcro sneakers; and whether the teacher would accept a milk carton and a hand drawn facsimile of the family faces?

If you find that mornings tend to madness at your house, here are a handful of cures.

Smooth mornings begin the night before. Check your calendar to see what's on tap for the day ahead. Check schoolbags for notes that contain vital last minute information. Note any peculiarities, special demands and tricky routing problems. Anticipate what's going to be needed - from props to clothes.

Give yourself a fighting chance at success. Figure out how many hours of sleep you need to be well rested. Get it. Encourage the rest of the family to do the same. Roll out of bed at the hour you've planned. Give yourself and other family members enough time. Daydreamers need longer than those who are clear headed from the moment their feet hit the floor.

Reconsider the activities you pack into the morning. Do you absolutely have to throw in a load of laundry before you leave for work or could it be left until the end of the day? Keep to the basics. Resist the temptation to try to sneak in one more thing before you leave.



Don't sabotage yourself. If you know you don't have time to read the paper in the morning, don't bring it in and sit down with it. Pull it out of the mailbox and set it inside on your way out the door. Scan the headlines and leave it at that until later.

Rethink routines. Does it still make sense for you to be dropping the little ones at daycare? Maybe things have changed and it would work better if you picked them up and your spouse dropped them off.

Renegotiate responsibilities. Perhaps another family member can put breakfast on the table. Anyone who can butter bread is capable of making lunches.

Give each person a box or cubby hole by the front door. These landing/launching depots can hold things that are in transit. Set up a change jar. On a weekly trip to the bank, get enough change for a week's worth of lunches and busfare. Hang a key hook by the front door. Use it. Don't tuck keys into pockets and purses.

Hold other family members responsible for giving an early warning about special activities and requirements. Consider adopting the old slogan: "An oversight on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part!"

If your child doesn't remember that she needs to take two carrots for the class stew until you drop her off at school, don't immediately detour around home again to pick them up. Next time she will remember sooner. Of course, if it's something more major, you'll want to help out; but the success of a stew doesn't depend on two carrots. The lesson will be worth a little loss in flavour.

Help children develop the habit of checking up on themselves by asking, before they head out the door, if they have everything they need for the day.

Above all, keep a sense of humour and perspective about the whole thing. No one ever died from occasionally being late to school or work. On the plus side, morning misadventures make great coffee break stories!

**"Start every day with a smile
and get it over with."**

W. C. Fields

