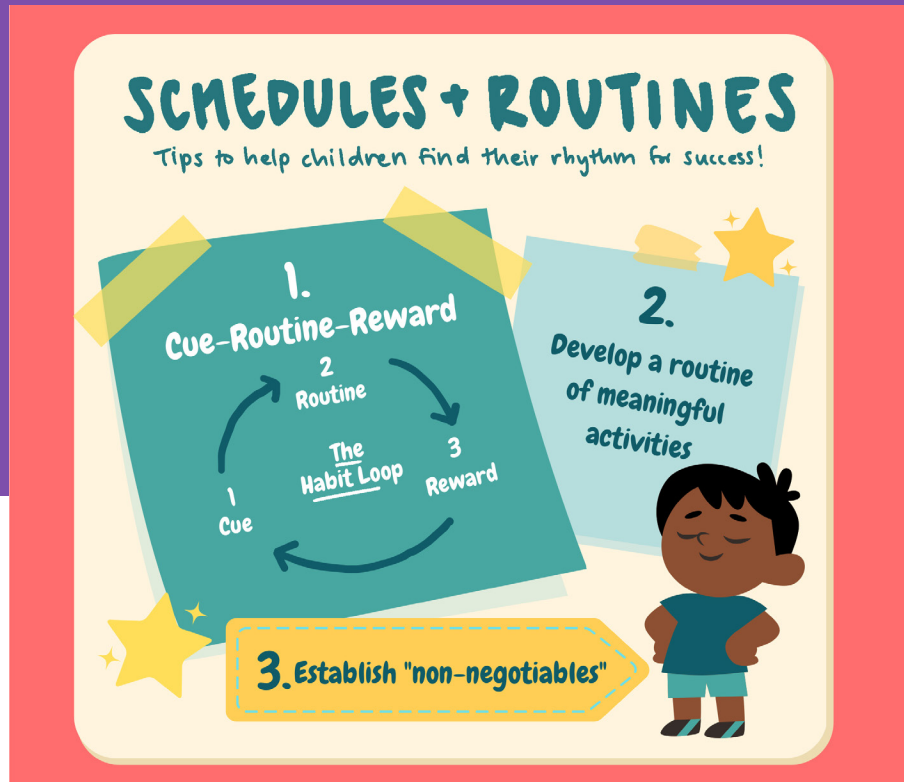


## SAFETY NEEDS

# Schedules and Routines

Helping Children Find Their Rhythm for Success



Artwork by Hailey Choi

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Scott Martin, M.Ed.,** has a passion for helping high-risk students and their families by partnering with other educators to empower families. He has excelled as a teacher, principal in four school districts, basketball coach, and in his current position at the Michigan Department of Education. He has advocated for support to meet the needs of students across the state, including his son, who receives special education services for mental health needs. Resources exist, but many children and their families cannot access them. Scott is committed to connecting children with available supports to help them thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. As an advocate for children and families, the successes that he has witnessed when they receive the help they need motivates him to be a champion for children in any way he can.

**What's Scott's favorite physical activity?**

*My favorite physical activity is weight training.*

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## The importance of schedules and routines for children

Remember *Home Alone*, that classic holiday movie about a boy named Kevin who ends up with a lot of free time on his hands when he's left behind at home? School is out and there's no adult supervision. So what does he do? He stays up late, he eats unhealthy foods, and he binge watches old movies and TV shows. At first, he has the time of his life exploring his newfound freedom. But over time, he recognizes the importance of scheduling and routines.

Scheduling refers to when you do something, like arriving at school by 7:30 am or eating dinner at 6:00 pm. Routines are the order in which you do things. The focus here isn't on time but on consistency. An example might be preparing your child for bedtime each night; maybe they take a bath, put on comfy jammies, brush their teeth, and read a story.

Family schedules and routines are important. Regular schedules help children feel secure and comfortable. Schedules and routines also help kids understand what is expected of them, which can reduce behavior such as tantrums. Routines can help children stay physically active, too.

The next three sections of this module give you and your family tips for developing schedules and routines that include moving together, thinking together, and being together!



## MOVE

### Scheduling activity into your family routine

Creating a physical activity schedule for your family is a great way to spend quality time together. This type of schedule promotes a healthy lifestyle. Schedules that give children options tend to be more engaging. Ideally, this schedule will include both chosen and planned activities. [Research](#) has shown that the length of play can affect a child's social and cognitive development (the term "cognitive" refers to thinking, reasoning, and remembering); playing for more than 30 minutes leads to richer social and cognitive play.

Physical activities should be included in your schedule every day. You can start with simple activities and add more challenging ones as time goes on; doing so will help your family stick to an activity routine. Check out the physical activity schedule below for example.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	Weight Training	30 minute brisk walk	30 minute brisk walk	Weight Training
						

Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Question:** How might you add some choice and variety to this schedule?

**Answer:** You could include different types of activities (e.g., biking, skateboarding) to make sure your kids enjoy themselves. Keep in mind that the more children can help select activities, the more engaged they will be. For more ideas of different types of physical activity, visit the CDC's [Active People, Healthy Nation<sup>SM</sup> website](#).



## THINK

### Developing a routine of meaningful activities

Schedules and routines are crucial for regular physical activity. They are also important for things like homework, household chores, and family time.

When planning family schedules and routines, consider the following:

- The balance among types of activities
- The pace of activities
- The amount of time your child can focus on an activity
- The times of day your child is most alert
- The number of adults available to help

A daily schedule will help you and your family prioritize activities and provide some structure to support your goals. A daily schedule has lots of benefits:

- Setting aside time to meet daily goals
- Helping your family be more productive
- Limiting procrastination
- Establishing healthy habits
- Enjoying a good work-life balance

Here's a sample daily schedule for a week when children are in school:

**Check the Family Calendar for events!**

## DAILY SCHEDULE

<p><b>GOOD MORNING!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wake up on time</li> <li>Wash-up and dress</li> <li>Breakfast</li> <li>Take Out Trash</li> <li>Go to School</li> </ul>	<p><b>BODY FLEX CHOICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bike or Scooter</li> <li>Playground or Park</li> <li>Shoot hoops</li> <li>Dance Party</li> <li>InPACT at Home Videos</li> </ul>
<p><b>GOOD AFTERNOON!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk Dog</li> <li>Empty Dishwasher</li> <li>Homework</li> <li>Dinner</li> <li><b>BODY FLEX (30 MIN.)</b></li> <li><b>MIND FLEX (30 MIN.)</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>MIND FLEX CHOICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read</li> <li>Write a story</li> <li>Draw, color, paint</li> <li>Do a Puzzle</li> <li>Listen to music</li> </ul>
<p><b>GOOD EVENING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>FAMILY FLEX (60 MIN.)</b></li> <li>Wash-Up</li> <li>Brush teeth</li> <li>Put on pajamas</li> <li>Go to bed on time</li> </ul>	<p><b>FAMILY FLEX CHOICES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk or bike ride</li> <li>InPACT at Home Videos</li> <li>Family Movie</li> <li>Cards/Board Game</li> </ul>

The boxes on the left represent non-negotiables or routines, broken down by times of day. Things that are non-negotiable must be done; they are not choices. To the right, you'll see options that children can plug into your family's routine. What would work best for your family when setting a daily schedule for the school week? How might your family's days look different? Which non-negotiables could you put in the left-hand boxes? What kinds of chosen activities (for mind, body, and family time) might you put in the right-hand boxes?

Notice the "Check the Family Calendar for events" reminder at the top: this is one way you can help your family keep track of when the daily schedule may change, such as for doctor's appointments, sports practices, birthday parties, and other activities that come up.

How might you develop your daily family schedule with routines? It doesn't have to look exactly like the above example. Once completed, how will you post it? For instance, you could share the schedule electronically, print it out, write it on paper or poster board, or use a dry erase board or chalkboard.



At the end of each day, review the activities you did from the daily schedule. Talk about how the schedule went. A daily check-in will help your child transfer information from short-term memory to long-term memory. It will also help with future planning; you can decide what did and did not work well for your family. Look at the next section for additional tips.

### Tips for creating your own family schedule

- Have a detailed schedule that each family member can follow.
- Consider posting the schedule. Review it at the beginning of the week and at the end of each day to help eliminate confusion for your family.
- Create a routine with your child's help, which will ensure the activities are ones they want to participate in.
- As a family, discuss all non-negotiables so your child can understand the importance of these activities.
- When creating a schedule, consider chosen activities that are fun and promote health. But keep in mind that everyone needs downtime during the day, too.
- For times in the schedule that have choice, flexibility can be fun, depending on how the day is going. Maybe you opt to extend an activity the family is really enjoying. Or you might change an activity if it's not entertaining.



### Turn schedules and routines into habits

When your family consistently follows a schedule and routine, this structure can more easily turn into a habit. A habit is a regular practice that can be hard to give up once formed.

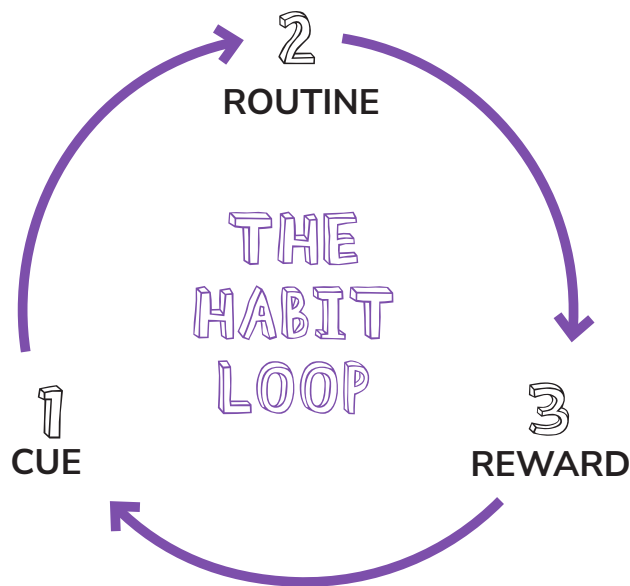
Habits develop through a cue–routine–reward loop, such as when you set out a toothbrush (cue), your child puts toothpaste on it and brushes their teeth (routine), and then you read a bedtime story together (reward). Teeth brushing will become a habit if done consistently. This habit formation loop applies to nearly any behavior. Maybe you make lunch and put it on the table while playing the same song each day (cue); your child comes to the table, eats their meal, and cleans up after (routine). Then, your family plays outside for 20 minutes (reward). Rewards can also be small gifts or points that your child can earn and later redeem for a prize.

Remember, your child may try to push boundaries when asked to complete activities. Testing limits can lead to conflict between you and your child during routines. This tension can be verbal, physical, or silent (e.g., your child ignores you when you speak to them). These kinds of challenges can take the joy out of the day and make it difficult to follow the schedule you've created. Try the following strategies to ease tension as needed:

- Direct your child calmly using as few words as possible.
- Help them start to put away the materials for an activity. Then, get ready for the next item on the schedule.
- Kneel to their eye level and quietly use your voice.
- Use sentences such as “When you do \_\_\_\_, then we can do \_\_\_\_” or “If you \_\_\_\_, then we’ll \_\_\_\_.”

- Walk away for a few minutes, then return and remind them about the schedule.
- If they cooperate, praise them!
- Reinforce good behavior with a reward, such as a sticker or other incentive.

Children may be motivated by different strategies when introducing a routine or schedule. Consider changing your techniques (cues and rewards) to meet their needs. Children's motivations also change with age: cues and rewards for a 5-year-old will vary from those for a 15-year-old.



### Helping to create positive family experiences!

Engaging in meaningful activities during the day is a great way to strengthen your family and enjoy time together. Scheduling family time can be difficult because of the many demands in our lives. Even when we schedule family time, it can be hard to be fully present. Mindfulness is helpful in this regard. When we're mindful, we're completely engaged in the present. For you, mindfulness might mean fully paying attention to your child's voice and giving them options. Being present during family activities is essential for creating a more positive relationship between you and your child. Everyone needs to be mindful to get the most out of family time; being truly present allows for meaningful discussion and sharing. Family schedules and routines are an excellent way to help children find their rhythm for success!

Now it's time to practice the skills that you've learned in this module. To get started, take the 20-day InPACT Schedules and Routines Challenge.

## 20-day InPACT Schedules and Routines Challenge

The 20-day challenge aims to enhance your family's skills in developing schedules and routines. Studies suggest that it takes 21 days to form a habit and over 90 days to establish a lasting lifestyle change. Our hope is that by completing the 20-day Schedule and Routine challenge, your family will continue practicing the most effective activities until they become a lasting and positive habit.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Teamwork
<b>Week 1</b> Welcome to the Schedules and Routines Challenge! Each week will help you build skills to maintain schedules and routines.  This week: Use family teamwork to find a calendar + establish routines.	Research to find a calendar that works best for your family—have everyone find options!  Tip: Use the InPACT videos and make them a part of your daily routine!  <a href="#">Step-Up Challenge</a>	Choose 2-3 calendars you like, talk about them, and choose the final one you will use as a family for scheduling.  <a href="#">Gymnastics Floor Skills Family Workout</a>	Decide where in your home you will post your calendar and place it there.  <a href="#">Family Activities Workout</a>	Make a list of routines that must be done daily for the family (your non-negotiables!).  <a href="#">Family Pilates and Yoga Strength and Conditioning</a>	Talk and decide as a family how to do each routine.  <a href="#">Kickboxing Workout</a>	Write 3 key take-aways about using family teamwork to find a calendar and establish routines 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
<b>Week 2</b> This week:  Practice routine + work on flexibility in the routine for events  Keep being active as a family!	Practice each of the agreed-upon routines.  <a href="#">Family High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)</a>	Write the routines on your weekly calendar as a family.  <a href="#">Family Push-Up Challenge</a>	Make a list of weekly events that happen every week.  <a href="#">Total Body Cardio and Strength Family Workout</a>	Decide transportation and who is best suited for driving and carpooling.  <a href="#">Gymnastics Beam Skills Family Workout</a>	Write weekly events into your calendar as a family.  <a href="#">Positive Self-Images Family Workout</a>	Write 3 key take-aways about being flexible for scheduled events: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
<b>Week 3</b> This week:  Practice routine + work on making adjustments  Keep being active as a family!	Create the weekly calendar with all routines and family events.  <a href="#">Gymnastics Strength and Conditioning Family Workout</a>	Talk as a family and review how the routines were done last week and if improvement needs to happen.  <a href="#">FITT Family Workout</a>	Update calendar with new or revised events as needed— who is responsible for this?  <a href="#">Family Basketball Workout</a>	Assess how transportation is going and if adjustments need to happen.  <a href="#">Family Step-Up Challenge</a>	Make a calendar for the following week, indicating your routine, flexible events, and potential adjustments!  <a href="#">Family Arm Circuit</a>	Write 3 key take-aways about making adjustments to your routine: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____
<b>Week 4</b> This week:  Practice routine + work on incorporating flex activities (see the module for more!)  Keep being active as a family!	<b>Body Flex:</b> <a href="#">Sports Theme Workout</a>  <b>Mind Flex:</b> Read <b>Family Flex:</b> Go for a walk	<b>Body Flex:</b> <a href="#">Volleyball Skills</a>  <b>Mind Flex:</b> Puzzles <b>Family Flex:</b> Family movie	<b>Body Flex:</b> <a href="#">Total Body HIIT</a>  <b>Mind Flex:</b> Listen to music. <b>Family Flex:</b> Board or card game	<b>Body Flex:</b> <a href="#">Water Bottle Fitness</a>  <b>Mind Flex:</b> Write a story. <b>Family Flex:</b> Crafting	<b>Body Flex:</b> <a href="#">Core Workout</a>  <b>Mind Flex:</b> Color, paint, draw <b>Family Flex:</b> Bike ride	Write one activity from each category you will keep doing:  Body _____  Mind _____  Family _____