# BEDTIME ROUTINES

Routines do indeed help kids feel more secure. They also have lots of other benefits, like helping kids feel more comfortable cooperating (because they don't feel so pushed around), helping kids learn good self-care habits, and developing responsibility.

Bedtimes are a great place to begin because they include real rewards for your kids -- time you spend with each of them. That means kids will be more accepting as you introduce the new routine. You can explain to them that you want to make sure you get "quality time" with each of them every night.

How do you figure out your desired routine? Start by deciding what time you want each child in bed. You shouldn't have to wake them up in the morning. If you do, then it means they aren't getting enough sleep. So keep moving bedtime earlier until they wake up by themselves in the morning.

Once you have your target bedtime for each child, count backwards, thinking about what each of them will be doing at each point in time. Because your kids are different ages, they will be doing different things, but your family as a whole can still have a routine.

Then talk with your kids about the routine. What do they think? Have you forgotten anything? Discussing the routine with kids helps them "own" the routine and reduces power struggles. Give them as much choice as possible.

Finally, print your new schedule out and post a copy on the bathroom door near their bedrooms, and another copy on the refrigerator. Add photos of your kids doing each activity. Most kids like to be involved in taking the photos and gluing them on the schedule, which again makes it "their schedule" instead of just "your schedule."

Example

17:30 Dinner time

18:00 Game together

18:30 Bath/shower/Pjs

19:00 TV time / snack / drink

19:30 Teeth brushed

19:35 Story/read together in bed

20:00 Lights out