



## How can I make the mornings calmer and more harmonious?



The local streets may look peaceful, but behind the closed front doors, all is not so calm. The morning mayhem of getting children awake, out of bed, cleaned, dressed, fed, packed and ready to go reaches fever pitch about 8 o'clock as families emerge from their home to face the day at nursery, playgroup, crèche, school and work. The number of things that have to be accomplished, with very definite time pressures, make it a real flashpoint. Whether the journey is made on foot, bike, scooter, car or public transport, one step wrong now can set the whole day out for everyone.....

Here are some simple things that will make the mornings run more smoothly and this has a great knock-on effect on the rest of the day. As the mornings slowly improve, make sure you notice and use Descriptive Praise for all the improvements, strategies and effort involved!

### BE A TIME REALIST

Rather than a time optimist! Take some time, by yourself, to work out how long it really takes to prepare bowls of cereal, butter slices of toast, pour milk or juices and make a strong cup of tea or coffee.... And mop up a couple of spills, feed the cat, prepare the lunch boxes, pack the reading folder, sign the form trip slip, as well as have a shower, get yourself and them dressed, find your hairbrush, toothbrush, any other brush, and your keys....

It can be quite illuminating – my guess of 60 minutes was more than 50% wrong. No wonder I wasn't making it out in time and felt like a failure every morning. I was trying to achieve the impossible because I hadn't allowed the right amount of time!

### PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE

There is one great thing about the journey to nursery or school - it happens at the same time, in the same way every day for several weeks! When we continue to do the same thing over and over again desperately hoping for a different outcome, it has been called insanity. So if getting ready each morning isn't working for you, don't get ready in the morning. Get ready the night before.

With the help of your children, pack school bags, lay out uniform or clothes, empty the dishwasher and lay the breakfast table. You can make it fun – time yourselves, do it to music, treat yourselves afterwards. Get practical – what do you all need in order to do this job well? More shirts? A place to keep shoes? Set of toothbrushes downstairs? An emergency something somewhere?

### WHO, WHAT, WHEN AND WHERE

Do you spend time most mornings 'discussing' who sits where in the car, who goes out of the front door first, who carries which bag, who holds whose hands? Ever been forced to run after a child who has simply run or scooted ahead, while leaving another behind? Before it happens again, sit down and start a positive discussion with the children about what needs to happen, and ask them how it could work.

Even young children come up with surprisingly useful, relevant and fun ideas. And they love being asked – it makes them feel involved in their own life. And then let them take responsibility for recording the details by writing down/illustrating the plan – it doesn't matter what it looks like. It matters that they buy into it.