

ADHD FRIENDLY ROUTINES



INTRODUCTION

Dealing with life when you have a child with ADHD can be very demanding.

It feels like no amount of bribing, begging, or pleading ever makes a difference.

This is something many parents of these challenging but wonderful kids face every day. You're not alone; lots of parents feel the same frustrations and exhaustion.

Trying to find routines that actually work can seem like an endless game of trial and error, leaving you worn out and desperate for answers.

But you don't need to spend years testing ideas to figure out a basic routine for your child.

In this ebook, you'll discover the **top routines that parents swear by** to build a strong foundation for your child.

From there, it's just about finding ways to fine-tune these routines to suit your child's unique needs.

With this resource, you'll have a head start in creating a routine that works, saves you time and reduces stress.

Let's get to it!

Marko Juhant,

Parenting Expert at Strategicparenting.com

1. CREATING A COZY, PREDICTABLE DAY

When people hear the word "routine," they usually picture a super strict schedule or just a way to organise things. But routines are more than that. They're these little daily habits that help kids grow and learn.

Here are the two key things about routines:

1. They should happen **regularly**.
2. They should be **easy to understand and follow**.

Kids thrive when their world is predictable, with adults who act in reliable ways and events that happen at regular times.

For example, that's why morning and bedtime routines are so important.

They help kids know what to expect each day, which really calms them down and makes them feel safe.

This little bit of structure can make a huge difference in their sense of security.

For kids with ADHD, rituals are even more important.

- a) They often have trouble focusing and staying organised, so having a regular routine can help them feel more in control and less stressed.
- b) Knowing what comes next makes it easier for them to move from one activity to another.
- c) Plus, routines offer steadiness and a sense of belonging, which can be incredibly comforting. The joy and connection they feel during these moments can be a powerful source of strength when they're feeling stressed or anxious.

Let's get started with something that'll make your life so much easier and help your child feel more secure and confident.

First things first, write down all the tasks your child does every day. Think about everything, from waking up in the morning to bedtime. Put these tasks in order to help your little one stay on track.

Next, make a weekly checklist. Print it out every Sunday to get ready for the week ahead.

Then, put the printed chart somewhere your child can easily see it. Maybe on the fridge or in their room. Each time they complete a task, let them mark it off with a fun sticker or a cute little "done" sign. If you've got a whiteboard, using magnets is great too (saves you from printing a new list every week)!

This simple technique isn't just about getting things done; **it's about building good habits**. The chart will help your child get into a routine without you having to remind them constantly.

Plus, each check mark will give them a little boost of confidence—they'll feel so proud of themselves! And for you, it's an easy way to keep track of their progress and cheer them on.

And hey, be patient!

Building a routine takes time, so don't stress if it's not perfect right away. Remember, it's all about the journey, and the rewards are definitely worth it.

WEEKLY ROUTINE CHART

TASK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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2. MORNING ROUTINES

Over the years, so many parents have shared their favourite ways to kick-start their morning routine:

- Do a mental body check-in.
- Shower while mentally planning the day.
- Prep for the next day in the evening.
- Avoid social media in the morning.
- Eat a protein-rich breakfast.
- Start the day with some stretching.
- Set multiple alarms to keep the morning running smoothly.
- Make the bed every morning to feel organised and motivated.
- Begin the morning with something they enjoy, like reading.
- Listen to a favourite podcast or music while getting ready.
- Take a daily walk, rain or shine.

While these are great suggestions, many parents struggle to get their children to adopt the same habits.

2.1. Why Kids Struggle With Morning Routines

- a) Children, especially those with ADHD, have difficulty focusing on one task for a long time.
- b) Most young kids might not fully grasp why these routines are important.
- c) Kids often resist new routines because they prefer what's familiar and comfortable.
- d) They often act on impulses rather than sticking to a plan.
- e) Moving from one activity to another can be challenging without a clear structure.

2.2. 15-Minute Plans

As you've probably already noticed, kids (especially those with ADHD) can get easily distracted.

And it's not really their fault. They get easily distracted due to short attention spans, high sensitivity to stimuli, impulsivity, difficulties with executive functioning, lack of internal motivation, and feelings of overwhelm and anxiety.

However, you can definitely help them get things done consistently by creating systems that support their brain processes.

To do that, break down their morning into 15-minute chunks.

So, instead of thinking about the whole morning as one big task, break it into small, manageable pieces. This makes everything feel less overwhelming for (you and) your child.

By getting them to focus on short intervals, you can help them stay on task and not get sidetracked.

That way, when they complete each small task, they get a sense of accomplishment. This motivates them to keep going.

To really make the most out of your mornings, I recommend two things:

- 1) **Do as much as possible the night before.** Picking out clothes, prepping breakfast items, and packing school bags will definitely make your mornings feel less chaotic (and more controlled).
- 2) **Track their time** using things like countdown timers. Your kids might argue with you in the mornings, but they can't argue with a timer; it's there to make daily tasks clear and non-negotiable.

- Here's how you can do it:

1. Waking up (15 minutes)

Start by waking your kid up 1-2 hours before school.

Then, designate 15 minutes for them to get out of bed, wash their face and get dressed in the clothes they picked out the night before.

To make it even easier, you can divide these tasks into 5 minutes each.

2. Breakfast time (15 minutes)

Ideally, you want your child to wake up when breakfast is ready. That way, you can all sit down together as a family to chat and plan the day ahead.

Similarly, preparing breakfast the night before or having a simple plan can save you some much-needed time in the morning.

3. Morning hygiene (15 minutes)

Give your child 15 minutes to brush their teeth and comb their hair. Just make sure they have everything they need ready and within easy reach to make this routine smoother.

4. Backpack check (15 minutes)

Kids with ADHD tend to be forgetful, so you want to make sure they have everything they need for school (homework, lunch, supplies, etc.).

Get them to pack the backpack the night before and also designate 15 minutes for them to go through it in the morning before heading out.

5. Quiet time (15 minutes)

Encourage them to take 15 minutes of quiet time before school. This could be any calm activity to ease into the day (e.g. reading).

That way, they'll feel more peaceful before starting school.

Morning Tracker

DATE June 1, 2024

TASK				STATUS
waking up				
having breakfast				
checking the bag				
morning hygiene				
quiet time				

Quick Reminders:

Make sure you have your homework, lunchbox, water bottle, and pencil case. Oh, and also-tie your sneakers tightly so they don't come undone.

You can also use this printable chart I've already prepared for you on the following page. Simply fill it in with tasks that suit your child's needs.

But remember, **the key to a smooth morning is to follow your child's rhythm.**

For some kids, 5-minute tasks work better than 15-minute ones. That's why I included 5 circles in 3 different spots on the chart.

They can cross them off or colour them in as they go along. It's a great way to keep them engaged.

Also, it's really important to give your kid something they can touch and interact with.

That's why I'm a big fan of physical charts. They are an awesome way to make tasks more fun while helping your child stay on track.

This way, they won't simply forget about the time.

And hey, if they can see their progress visually, it's even more motivating for them.

I've seen firsthand with tons of families that breaking mornings into 15-minute chunks works wonders for kids.

It seriously takes a lot of the stress out of the morning rush.

Sure, it might take a bit to find the best approach, but once you do, **mornings will be so much smoother.**

Go for it; see how it goes!

I'm positive it'll make your mornings a lot less hectic and a lot more manageable.

Morning Tracker

DATE _____

TASK				STATUS
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○
_____	○○○○○	○○○○○	○○○○○	○

Quick Reminders:

If your kid gets bored with the chart...

I've thought of a fun twist to keep things interesting!

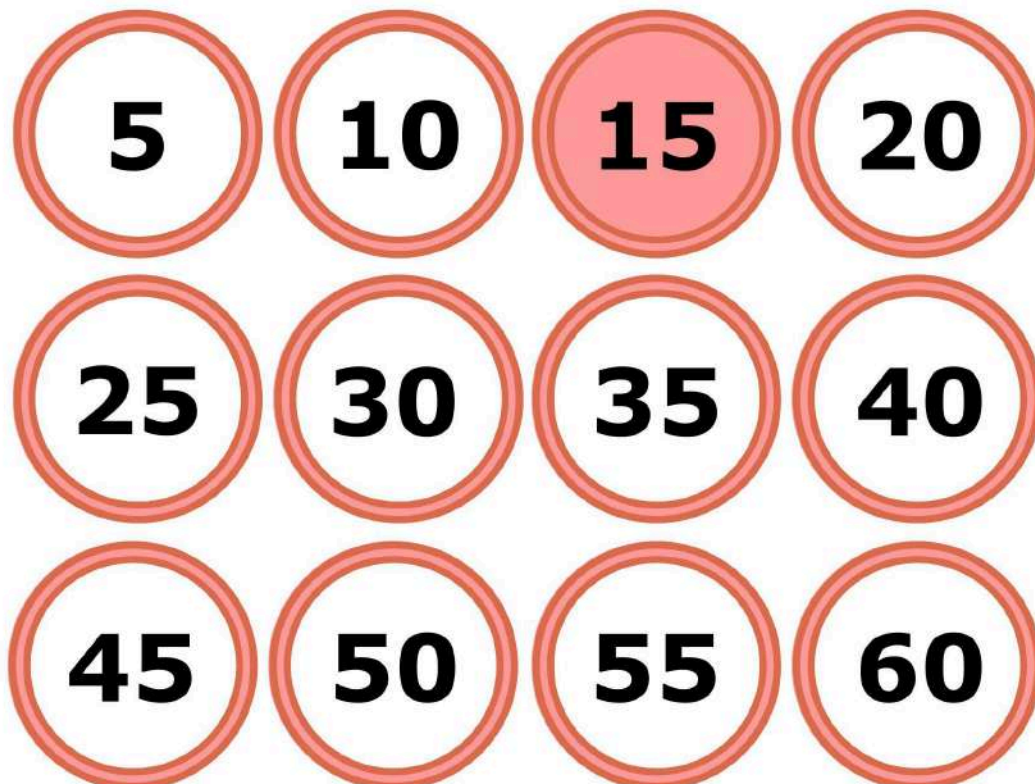
Instead of always using the same chart, you can give your child "time tokens." Print out these 12 tokens with different times: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, and 60 minutes.

The goal is to let your child use them to manage their morning routine.

Here's how you can use them:

- Give your kid a 10-minute token to get out of bed and get dressed.
- Hand them a 15-minute token to eat their breakfast.
- Use a 5-minute token for a quick teeth-brushing session.
- Give them a 10-minute token to check their school bags.
- Reward them with a 20-minute token for some quiet time.

The best part about these "time tokens" is that they are flexible. You can adjust them to fit different activities and times.



2.3. Timing Is Everything

On another note, some kids just aren't "morning kids." No matter what you do, they'll complain the whole time. These "night owls" just aren't wired for early mornings.

So, with your kid with ADHD, timing is everything. Whether they're early risers or late-nighters, listening to their internal clock is key.

To help them out, you want to identify their **prime time**—this is actually super beneficial for parents of ADHD kids who are easily distracted.

- When your child is more focused, they're less likely to get frustrated.
- Working when they are naturally more patient and calm can make a big difference in their behaviour.
- They can get more done in less time, reducing the stress of unfinished tasks.

To find out when your kid is most alert, use this printable.

DAY	ACTIVITY & TIMING	FOCUS LEVEL (WEEK ONE)	FOCUS LEVEL (WEEK TWO)
➔		⋇	⋇
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			

Here's how:

1. **Have them do a simple test** or start a specific activity that usually takes a lot of time and resistance (schoolwork, chores, etc.).

For example, schedule one-hour study sessions at different times throughout the week:

DAY	ACTIVITY & TIMING	FOCUS LEVEL (WEEK ONE)	FOCUS LEVEL (WEEK TWO)
<i>Example</i>	<i>DOING HOMEWORK</i>	⇩	⇩
MONDAY	07:00 - 08:00	3	5
TUESDAY	14:00 - 15:00	6	6
WEDNESDAY	17:00 - 18:00	9	8
THURSDAY	19:00 - 20:00	3	4
FRIDAY	21:00 - 22:00	3	2

2. Monitor their focus and **consider all factors** that might have influenced their performance that day. Did they just get home from school? Did they eat before? Take a nap? Have playtime?
3. After each session, ask them to **rate their focus** from 1-10.
4. Repeat for at least one to **two weeks** to get reliable results.

If they focus well in the morning, schedule all the tedious work that requires more energy during that time. If they perform better in the evening, have them study before or after dinner.

Stick to this specific schedule for at least a month to see the changes.

3. EVENING ROUTINES

So, by now, you've figured out that:

- a) **Getting stuff done at night can help ease your mornings.**
- b) **Your kid's prime time plays a major role in how they'll respond to your instructions** and how your entire day will look.

So, in the morning, you and your child might be well-rested, and it might be relatively quiet.

However, at night, they might become pretty restless. It's really their brain's fault that they get super amped up at bedtime.

That's when you find them goofing around, trying to get everyone's attention when they're really supposed to be getting ready for bed.

In these situations, you can't really rely on your patience—it will run out sooner than you know it.

This also isn't setting a good example for your kid because they'll have a harder time learning how to manage their ADHD (and channel all the benefits that come with it).

Keep in mind that ADHD kids are developmentally behind, so you need to scale back your expectations. If they can't get themselves to sleep, that doesn't mean they're just "naughty".

They simply need your help.

Start by using the same principles as you did in the morning routine:

- Simplify the routines.
- Use 15-minute tasks.
- Have them follow a timer to get things done.

3.1. The Key to Better Sleep

But there's one major thing that most parents overlook when it comes to evening routines, and that's screen usage.

Screens hijack our kids' attention and patience.

For kids with ADHD, this can get a whole lot worse. The more screen time they have during the day, the more their brains get overstimulated.

This makes it harder for them to focus, increases their impulsivity, and can lead to crankiness.

When kids are exposed to screens before bedtime, their brains get even more wound up. This makes it super difficult for them to wind down and get ready for sleep.

Their attention gets scattered, and they become more impatient and restless.

So, the first thing you want to do is **get them to stop using tech at least 2-3 hours before bedtime.**

And you want to do it in a way that doesn't trigger them.

So, forget about saying things like:

- *"Turn off your phone now!"*
- *"I'm taking away your devices if you don't stop!"*
- *"How many times do I have to tell you to turn that off?"*

Instead of yelling, simply get them to sign a Family Screen Time contract.

You can create one yourself, or you can use this one I've already prepared:

OUR FAMILY SCREEN TIME CONTRACT

1. Screen-Free Zones

- Where: No screens in bathrooms and bedrooms.
- How: Put up a charging station for all our devices.
- _____
- _____

2. Screen-Free Family Time

- When: No screens during meals.
- What: Let's enjoy talking and having fun together!
- _____
- _____

3. No Screens Before Bed

- Turn off all devices by _____ p.m.
- How: Put devices in the charging station zone.

AWESOME REWARDS

1. We do your favourite activity!
2. Earn a fun game night with the family.
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

IF WE FORGET THE RULES

- Less screen time the next day.
- Extra chores!
- Fun activities might be postponed.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Sign here to agree to follow these fun and easy rules:

Date

Parent

Child



by Strategic Parenting

Here's why signing this contract works so well for ADHD kids:

1. First off, it sets **clear expectations** so everyone knows what's up. Plus, the contract is a handy visual reminder of the rules. Kids with ADHD thrive on structure and routine, and this contract helps create that. It keeps everyone consistent, which makes it way easier to follow the rules.
2. Signing the contract makes it feel official, so the kids feel more **responsible**. It also turns the rules into a fun game, making it more engaging for them.
3. Another great thing is it reduces arguments. Clear rules and consequences mean **fewer misunderstandings**. Over time, following the contract will help your kid build lasting, good habits.

You can even take it a step further and teach them how to...

3.2. Minimise Notifications

Kids with ADHD can easily get overwhelmed by all the stimuli around them.

When they're constantly distracted during the day, their brains stay in overdrive, making it harder for them to wind down at night. If they're bouncing from one distraction to another, it's tough for them to feel calm and ready for bed.

However, by keeping distractions to a minimum, their brains stay more balanced and less overstimulated.

This means when bedtime rolls around, they're not still buzzing from all the day's chaos. Instead, they feel more relaxed, making it easier for them to settle down and fall asleep.

That way, a “less distracted day” leads to a more peaceful and easier bedtime for your child.

How can you help them do this?

Well, get them to minimise the phone notifications in three steps:

- 1) Have them pick three social media** or messaging apps to keep on their phone.

Chances are they already have a couple of them installed. Ask them to choose just three social media or messaging apps to keep on their phone. This is how they can become more intentional about their digital habits.

- 2) Next—get them to turn off all the unnecessary alerts** (such as their friends posting photos, follow requests, friend suggestions, etc.). You can even get them to “bundle” notifications.

This means grouping similar notifications together and receiving them at designated times instead of being bombarded with them throughout the day.

For example, you and your child could decide together that their YouTube notifications will all arrive every evening at 8 PM. This way, they can check them all at once without constantly being pulled away from other activities.

You can do a quick Google search on notification grouping for Apple devices and a group of notifications for Androids.

- 3) Grayscale their phone.**

This works on all phone brands.

The purpose is to make their phones less fun by draining all the colours that make everything seem interesting. By taking away the flashy colours, your child's phone will become less exciting and distracting.

3.3. Habit Stacking

To make it even easier for your child to follow their routines...

Get them to stack their habits.

This will make it easier for them to maintain their habits.

Curious about how habit stacking works?

Well, think of it this way—kids with ADHD often struggle to get started on tasks.

It's like their brains have a hard time shifting gears from one activity to another. It's because they usually feel overwhelmed (plus, they get easily distracted!).

All this makes it tough for them to focus and begin something new. On top of that, this constant battle can be super frustrating for them.

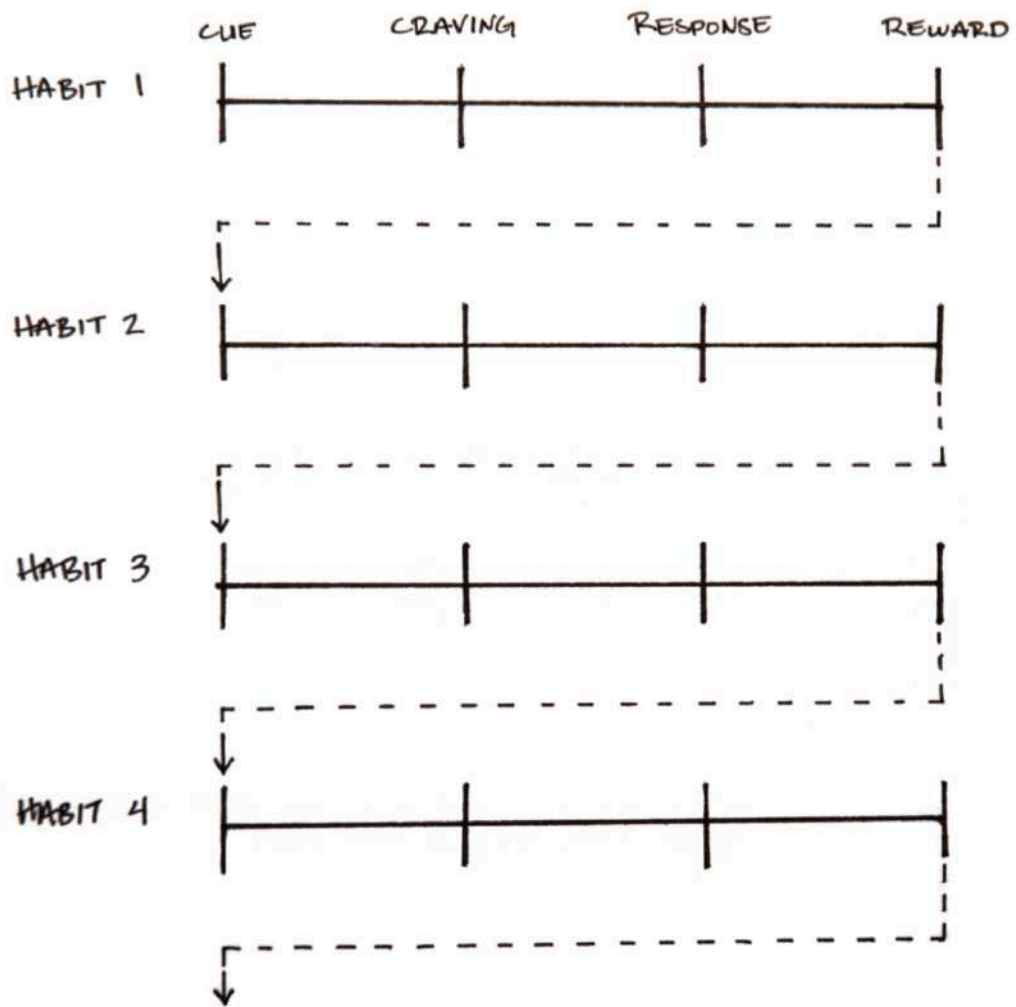
Now, imagine if, instead of trying to start five different tasks separately, **they could just start once and get a bunch of things done.**

That's where habit stacking comes in. By linking new tasks to an existing routine, they only have to initiate action once.

For example, brushing their teeth could be the trigger for washing their face, which then leads to putting on pyjamas.

Then, when they're already moving, they can keep the momentum going without requiring extra willpower.

Ideally, you want your child to write the task chain on the paper so they can imagine themselves doing the whole routine. I would even suggest noting it all down on a small notepad that they can carry with them.



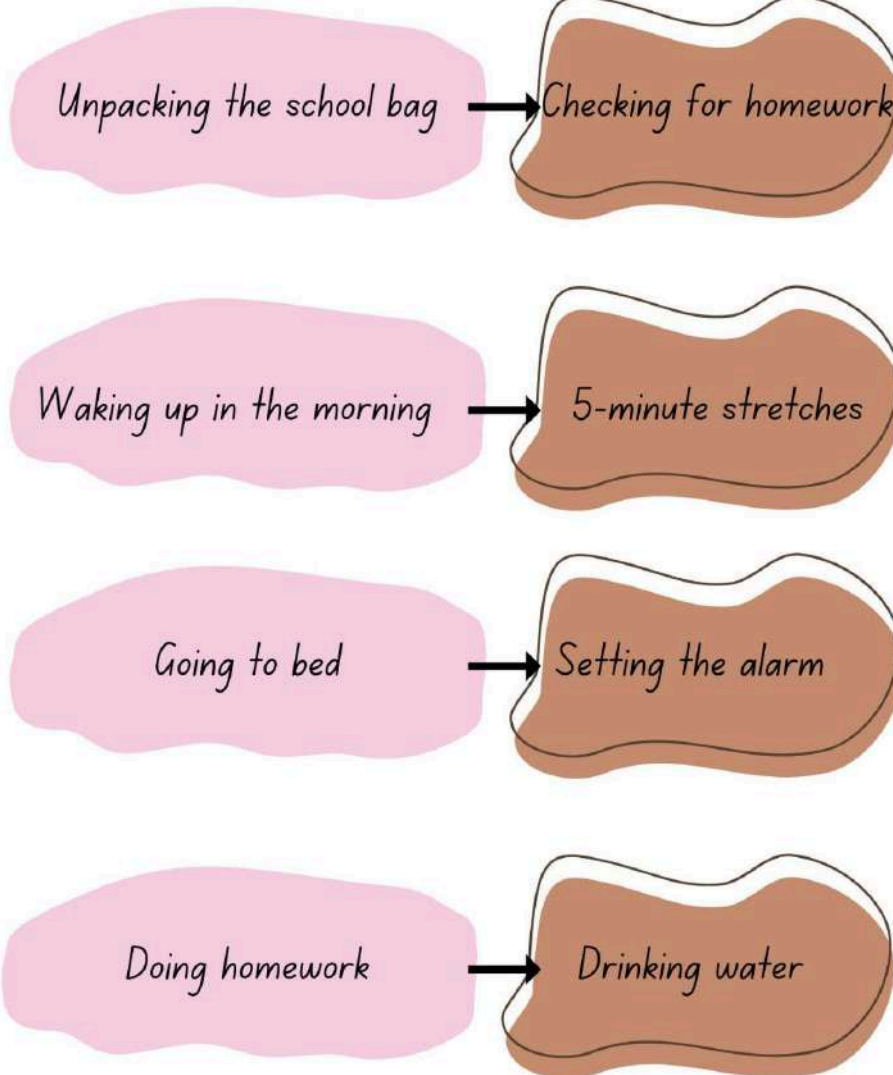
Excerpt from Chapter 4 of James Clear's New York Times bestselling book Atomic Habits

For example:

HABIT STACKING

CURRENT HABIT

STACK WITH



Use the same approach to help your child come up with their own stacking habits to strengthen their routine.

4. TAMING TANTRUMS

Managing your kid’s outbursts is probably one of the toughest parts of raising a child with ADHD. It can be super stressful and overwhelming, especially when it happens a lot.

You might feel frustrated, guilty, and totally burnt out. Plus, it can make you feel like you’ve lost control of the situation and your child.

These tantrums can also strain your relationships with your child.

But there's hope! To prevent these outbursts, you need to recognise what triggers them. The best way to do this is to develop a routine of **keeping track** of everything.

That’s why I’ve prepared this sheet for you.

Date: _____

FACTOR	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Outbursts							
Sleep <small>(how many hours, quality of sleep)</small>							
Food <small>(how many meals, type of foods)</small>							
Weather							
Situations in school <small>(for example tests, fights with classmates, etc.)</small>							
Special events <small>(for example going to the doctor)</small>							
Daily situations <small>(for example, commuting to school, sibling fights, participating in hobbies, etc.)</small>							

This simple sheet is designed to help you monitor and record the factors that might be contributing to your child's outbursts. By understanding these triggers, you can develop strategies to manage their behaviour more effectively.

Plus, knowing what sets off your child's outbursts helps you understand their emotional and behavioural needs better. This can strengthen your bond and create a more supportive relationship.

As a result, your child will end up with fewer tantrums, and your home will become a more peaceful place.

This is how you can use it:

1. Fill out the table as the day goes by.
2. By writing down all the factors in your child's day, you'll have a better chance of spotting patterns that lead to meltdowns.
3. For the best results, use the sheet daily for a month.
4. Use these insights to make changes and avoid future outbursts.

4.1. When the Dust Settles

Getting into the habit of proactively seeking the real reasons behind your child's tantrums or meltdowns is fantastic and really helpful.

However, it's also super important to sit down and talk to your kid when those rare occurrences happen, and one or two tantrums slip under the radar.

However, I've noticed that most children with ADHD are, in fact, reluctant to talk to their parents.

This is due to various reasons:

- They might be afraid of getting into trouble.
- They often struggle to put their feelings into words.
- They may think that their parents won't understand their perspective.
- They might feel ashamed or embarrassed about their outburst.
- Past experiences might make them feel like talking won't help.
- They act on impulse and may not remember or understand their triggers.

So, I used a different approach in my practice.

I've asked the kids to express their feelings by writing them down.

Next to it, I left a couple of lines for them to elaborate on steps they took to calm down.

WHEN THE DUST SETTLES

What happened:

I was doing my homework but I couldn't understand anything and that made me so upset that I hit my sibling because he was loud

Steps I took to calm down:

- I apologized to my little brother.....
- I went to my room to read my favourite book.....
- I asked Mom for a hug.....

What happened:

I really wanted a cookie before dinner but Mom was making dinner and she didn't allow me to eat it, so I started crying

Steps I took to calm down:

- I put on my favourite music.....
- I played with my toy to distract myself.....
- I drew a picture of how I was feeling.....

Alternatively, you could also get them to write about how they wished they had handled the situation.

WHEN THE DUST SETTLES

<p>What happened:</p> <p><i>I was doing my homework but I couldn't understand anything and that made me so upset that I hit my little brother because he</i></p>	<p>How I wished I had handled the situation:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I could have asked Mom to take him out</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I could have closed my room door</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I could have asked Dad for help</p>
<p>What happened:</p> <p><i>I really wanted a cookie before dinner but Mom was making dinner and she didn't allow me to eat it, so I started crying</i></p>	<p>How I wished I had handled the situation:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I could have walked away from the kitchen</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I could have asked for a fruit instead</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I could have eaten a cookie after breakfast</p>

That way, it was a whole lot easier for the kids to express their feelings.

It was less stressful than a face-to-face chat, and it gave them enough time to think about what they wanted to say.

Eventually, I encouraged them to go back to that piece of paper to **reflect** on their feelings and actions.

We would talk about things that helped them calm down in the heat of the moment.

Or I would get them to describe what they wished had happened instead.

WHEN THE DUST SETTLES

What happened:

Steps I took to calm down:

○
○
○

What happened:

Steps I took to calm down:

○
○
○

What happened:

Steps I took to calm down:

○
○
○

What happened:

Steps I took to calm down:

○
○
○

What happened:

Steps I took to calm down:

○
○
○

5. THE BEST THING FOR YOUR KID

The absolute best thing you can do for your child is to **stay calm when they're in distress**. This applies to all situations but is especially important for children with ADHD.

Many parents often forget that ADHD often comes with a lot of anxiety. It's not just about "forgetting appointments" and other typical symptoms. These kids live with a constant feeling that they're some sort of colossal failure because they can't meet the most basic expectations.

Simple things like getting ready to go out can be so draining for these kids. What feels easy for you and me (now that I manage my ADHD) might feel like a monumental task for your child.

"Okay, I need to brush my teeth. But where did I put my toothbrush? Oh, there it is. Wait, did I put toothpaste on it? I can't remember. Now I need to get dressed. But what should I wear? I can't decide if I want to wear the blue shirt or the red one. What if everyone thinks the red one looks weird? Maybe I should go with the blue one, but I wore that yesterday."

If this goes unchecked for too long, these kids will not only have issues with ADHD but also anxiety.

So, my advice to you is to always be **compassionate** with your child. If they're inattentive, hyperactive, or seem impossible to handle, they're probably having a much tougher time than you are.

And if you're at your wits' end trying to deal with them...

Try **writing them a letter** explaining what's bothering you. I've found this to be a surprisingly simple but effective way to connect with your child.

Here's a template in case you need one:

Looking Back

Dear _____ ,

- Describe what happened

- Explain how you felt at the time.

- Why do you think the situation escalated?

- What you learned from the experience.

- Suggest ways to handle similar situations in the future.

Signature:

Date:

CONCLUSION

I hope this short ebook has helped you understand the basics of how to make your child more organised (and also more cooperative).

At the end of the day, you know what's best for your child, but it's crucial to recognise these kids for who they truly are—brilliant but often misunderstood.

I've tried many methods throughout my career, but real change happened when I had the support of people around me who made me feel safe and loved, even when I made mistakes.

As someone with ADHD, this support was crucial in helping me navigate challenges and find effective solutions.

And I wish the same for you and your child.

Oh, and one more thing.

Considering that ADHD is such a hot topic nowadays, I've been eager for quite some time to gather top experts from the ADHD community to share some of the most successful and innovative methods with you.

Stay tuned for more information!

All the best,

Marko Juhant,

Parenting Expert at [Strategicparenting.com](https://www.strategicparenting.com)

