

# The Surprising Details Parents Overlook When Building Routines That Truly Work



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*“When kids push back, it’s often an unmet need making it hard for them to meet expectations.”*

## How to make routines exciting?

As someone with ADHD, routines are key for me—when I create them myself. I’ve realised that starting my day with a specific activity sets everything in motion. If I skip it, my day feels off. For example, I always start with a glass of lemon water. If I don’t, I end up not drinking enough water all day.

These little habits trigger the rest of my routine and keep me on track, letting me stay creative. To avoid getting bored, I mix things up. I have a different smoothie Monday through Wednesday, then repeat them for the rest of the week. It’s routine with just enough variety to keep it interesting. This approach works for kids too—stick to the routine but change up the details to keep it fun.

## When kids ignore routines

If they could stick to the routine without a fuss, they would—but they’re not. So, what’s really going on? It’s not about disrespect, manipulation, or just being a moody teenager. Why are they struggling with this routine? Sure, they’re glued to their electronics, but why is that? Maybe the homework feels too hard, or they don’t even know where to begin.

If they’re resisting the routine, it’s usually not the task itself that’s the issue—it probably just feels like too much. For kids like this, routines can often seem either boring or overwhelming. They might feel stuck, not knowing how to dive in, or their brain could be too overloaded to cope. Instead of pushing, try helping them break it down into steps.

One approach is to just sit with them while they’re on their devices. Ask, “*What are you playing?*” without bringing up homework. Build that connection first. Once there’s some trust, you can say, “*I see you’re having trouble getting started on your homework. Is the game just too fun, or does the homework feel scary?*”