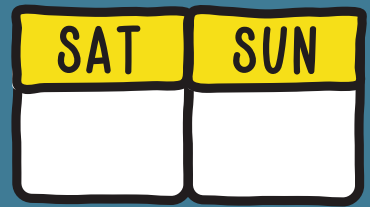


The Benefits of Routines for Military Children



Military life often comes with uncertainty and frequent change, both of which can be difficult for parents and children. Repetition, in the form of routines, has many benefits for military kids. Creating and maintaining a daily schedule can help military families feel more secure at home. There is also a sense of control and safety that comes with establishing routines when other things feel unpredictable. Keeping certain things consistent, like meal times and bed times, are especially helpful when other parts of military living can change abruptly. Adding routines to your day can be a simple way to help your child feel safe, confident and connected.

Feeling Safe

When children know what to expect from a situation, they are more able to cope with it. Routines are particularly important around times of separation such as deployments, an evening with a babysitter, or tucking them in at bedtime. For example, reading a story each night before bed can teach a child that there will always be a moment for connection at the end of a long day. Alternatively, if a child knows you will always hug goodbye before you leave them with their sitter, they begin to learn you will not disappear without warning, and that you will come back. This sense of predictability is especially important during PCS Season or a deployment to help children cope with challenging situations and emotions.

Building Independence

When children get used to following the same routines, they are more able to act independently. Routines can be particularly helpful around everyday tasks such as getting ready for school or for bed. Parents can take advantage of the power of routines by giving their children clear steps for getting tasks done. Consider walking your child through each of the steps in brushing their teeth, for example, and then giving them a chance to repeat the steps on their own. With enough repetition, children will be able to brush their teeth completely independently, freeing you up to do other important things. During a deployment, some older children may also be tasked with additional responsibilities. Using routines can help them stay organized and create a sense of mastery to complete these tasks successfully.

Decreasing Power Struggles

When children have consistent and predictable routines, they are more likely to do what is expected of them. If your child has a difficult time with routine, try empathizing that their feelings about the situation rather than battling with them. Saying something like, "I know it can be hard to stop playing and clean up. I don't always like to do that, either," can build a sense of connection and cooperation at a time that could otherwise be filled with conflict.



If you or a child are in need of support, call our 24/7 Kids & Teens Helpline at **904.202.7900** or text **LIFE** to **741741**. You can also contact Military OneSource at **800.342.9647** for free, confidential, non-medical counseling to help your family with military life stressors. If there is an immediate safety concern, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

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Tips to Create Routines in a Military Family



Routines can promote a well-balanced lifestyle by reducing stress from the unpredictable aspects of military life. Deployments and frequent relocations can be more manageable with a dependable schedule in place.

Try using these tips to establish a routine for your everyday activities:

Write it down.

Make a list of the family's day-to-day events, tasks, and activities. Keep your family's unique needs and characteristics in mind by tailoring the schedule to your military lifestyle.



Be flexible and patient.

As a military family, one thing you've learned is the art of adaptability. Remember that a routine may have to be adjusted. Do your best to be flexible and patient in the face of these challenges. If needed, make adjustments to accommodate your family's changing lifestyle and circumstances.



8:00 PM

Be simple and clear.

Simple routines are easier to follow and maintain long-term. Use the list of activities to structure your days in the Weekly Routine Planner. Stick to the basics: morning and bedtime, family mealtimes, playtime, naptime, school/homework, bath time, story time, appointments, etc.



Spend time together.

It can be hard to balance each family member's schedule. Try to set aside time for everyone to connect as a family at least once a day. This can be before or during a meal, while playing a game, or making a craft. When a parent is deployed, schedule regular time for your child with family or friends through their school, your installation, and local community.

Maintain structure.

Keep the same routine for your regular activities (mealtimes, bedtimes) week-to-week. If possible, try to keep the same general structure on the weekends to keep everyone on-track.



Weekly Routine Planner



Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
0700					
0800					
0900					
1000					
1100					
1200					
1300					
1400					
1500					
1600					
1700					
1800					
1900					
2000					
Meals					