



# Tender Hearts Child Therapy Center

*Parent Newsletter*

*August 2012*

## School Year Morning Routines

And so we begin another school year. For some of you this may be the first time you're getting your little one off to school. For others, this may be the last "first day of school" in your household. Many of you are probably somewhere in the middle of these two big events. At any stage of your child's school years, the morning routine is very important. This article is going to give you some practical suggestions for starting everyone's school day a little smoother.

First, wake up early (at least at first). Get everyone in the household up at least 15 minutes earlier than you think you are going to need. This includes parents. If you have to have your morning coffee before waking the kids, start an additional 15 minutes earlier. This will give the whole family enough time to get everything done before heading off to school and not be rushed or running late. As the school year goes on, you can adjust your wake-up times as things begin to run more smoothly.

Second, get everything done the night before that can be done. For example, pack lunches, lay out clothes, plan breakfast, gather up homework and all other school items in backpacks and put backpacks by the door. For younger kids (or teenagers who just take too long) get showers and baths the night before, as well.

To give children more responsibility, have a morning checklist. This can be an actual checklist or just one that parents go over with their children before leaving. Checklists can include things like:

- Eating breakfast
- Getting dressed
- Hair and teeth brushed
- Put shoes on
- Get backpacks and lunches

To try to avoid the morning procrastinators, give your kids an incentive if they get ready early. Allow them some time for TV, reading, a computer game, or something else they like to do before heading off to school.

Finally, while routines are important for children, it is also important to be flexible with your routines. Make changes as necessary to fit your lifestyle. For example, if you always fix a big breakfast for your children, but you consistently run 10 minutes late, try simplifying breakfast to cereal and toast and save those big breakfasts for the weekends. Hopefully these tips will help your school year get off to a good start!