



Foster Your Family

As busy moms, our plates are full juggling the kids, the spouse, the home, the plans and the playdates. On top of that, some of us are also juggling jobs or businesses or charitable work. Whatever it is, we're busy and our time is precious.

Our list of 'things to do' is long and often arduous. It's that invisible list that steals our time with multiple tasks that we tend to do for others that we probably should be allowing them to do on their own.

The biggest thieves of our time... Our Children. We mother them. We want to take care of them. We want to make their lives easier.

In the end, we are hurting them and ourselves by doing this. The sooner we can get them to master their tasks on their own, the more time we can give back to ourselves. Yes, we can multiply our time by stealing it back from our kids.

In order to do this, you need to be willing to make changes, big ones and small ones, and most importantly... **STICK TO IT.**

Making these changes to your daily routine requires consistency and mental toughness. As soon as you slack, they will slack. As soon as you jump back into doing it, they will let you.

They will push back and argue they don't want to do it. They will tell you they don't have time. They will do whatever they can to **NOT DO IT.**

You must be strong. You must be willing to 'let it happen', even if it takes longer than you'd like it to take, even if isn't done the way you might

want it done or whatever other reason your anal self would kick back into 'doing it' mode. Don't DO IT.

So moms... How do you start taking back your time from those little time suckers? I haven't mastered it or perfected it. It's WORK in Progress.

Here are my tips on how to get started.

If your kids are over the age of 4, this applies to you. Think about the tasks you are currently doing for your kids every morning before school, when they get home after school and every night before bed. Tasks that you do NOT need to be doing for them.

By giving your kids responsibilities, you are getting them started on a life of learning how to do things themselves, gain independence, giving them a sense of accomplishment and giving them the confidence to actually complete the next task and then next task and the next. You're teaching them invaluable skills that they will take with them for the *rest of their lives*.

Here's the most important and easiest one to implement.

Making their own beds! This may sound crazy but my kids have been making their beds since they were 4 years old. Yes, FOUR! We started as a game where they would still be in their bed and pull the covers over their heads and they'd have to squeeze out without messing it up. Then they would see if they could get all the wrinkles out of the cover and how neatly they could get the pillows on without messing it up. It eventually led to them forming a habit by playing the game with themselves. We would even have competitions for the fastest one to make their bed and the best made bed and they would win prizes... like, the night off from doing the dishes.

Kids want to play games so try to figure out how to make it fun. If your kids are older (11 and up) and still not making their beds and you need to incentivize them, sit with them and watch Admiral McRaven's Commencement speech from 2014 on You Tube. It will change your life and your kids lives as well.

Helping with Meal Time - Not only is it great to get your kids involved in weekly menu planning on Sunday nights but having them each pick a

meal of the week that they can help out with is also beneficial to you and to them. When I was in high school my mom decided it was time to go back to work. Getting dinner ready was now on me. She'd leave me notes with the details and I'd get it all prepped and ready. Kids 5 and up can assist with many different meal time activities such as setting the table, clearing the table, doing dishes, washing and peeling veggies. You'll find that busy kids don't argue with each other as much and don't have time to annoy their siblings. They also learn TEAMWORK.

Other tasks we put on our kids:

Laundry: Folding, putting it away, dropping off laundry in the laundry room to be cleaned.

Trash: Gathering trash on trash day and recycling day and taking it out.

Pet Care: Feeding, walking and taking care of pets.

Clean Up: Straightening up shoes and coats in the mud room, picking up after themselves in the bathroom, playroom and their own rooms.

Cleaning/Tidying their rooms is a weekend activity.

PS - On weekends, they are not allowed on Technology until beds are made, rooms are clean and teeth are brushed. If they get on tech before any of this, they lose an hour of screen time. We even have some weekend mornings where we are Tech free until noon. I know.... So crazy!

Below is the Chore Chart that hangs on the wall in our kitchen. We rotate the kids names each week but the chores stay the same.



Building a Routine:

Do your kids sit at the breakfast or dinner table waiting to be 'served'? Do they sit and watch as you run around the kitchen getting everything ready? Do they ask you to get them water or ketchup when you're sitting at the dinner table? Do you get up and do it? Time to break that routine. Put them to work setting the table, chopping veggies and ask them to get you a glass of water or an extra napkin or the butter. Stop doing this for them. As my mother would say in her British accent, 'are your feet and hands broken?' Feel free to take a softer approach but for g-ds sake, let them do things for themselves.

How many times do you end up running up and down the stairs in your house (if you have stairs) to fetch something for your kids. Mommy, can you get my vitamin. Mommy can you get me fresh water? Mommy, I forgot my socks, can you get them? Mommy, can you get me my lucky eraser from my bag to put next to my bed?

Wouldn't it be nice if they could check off the boxes of what needed to be done before they ventured upstairs to tackle their list. Or in the morning before school they can check off boxes to make sure they've done everything they need to do?

Below is a detailed list that we use in our house. I'm happy to share this Google doc so that you can make the changes you need that pertain to you and your family. Some of this might seem trite but it seems to be working in our house.

And the best part is, my children don't love me any less and they don't think I love them any less because of the responsibilities that we impart on them.

Morning Routine:

- Wake up and make your bed
- Grab your snacks and make sure they are in your bag
- Help prepare your lunch and pack lunch bag
- Fill up water bottle
- Feed/Walk th Pets
 - Kid 1: Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
 - Kid 2: Monday, Thursday
 - Kid 3: Weekends
- Eat breakfast
- Take Vitamins
- Brush teeth
- Put on shoes and pack bag
- Take out Garbage
 - Kid 1: Wednesday
 - Kid 2 : Monday and Friday
 - Kid 3: Mondays and Friday when at 76
- Kiss everyone and have a great day

Afternoon:

- Take Snack/Lunch out of bag. Place containers in the dishwasher. Empty water bottles.
- Wash your hands
- Grab a snack
- Do Homework and study

Before bed:

- Fill out lists for the morning (See Weekly Meal Schedule)
 - Get out snack/lunch bags and grab snacks
 - Prepare lunch by putting lunch bags out on the counter. Anything from the cabinet can be prepacked the night before rather than waiting till morning.
 - Grab water
 - Eat vitamins
 - Check the weather
 - Pack your backpack for the morning
- Immediately before bed:
- Brush Teeth
 - Layout clothes
 - Fill water in diffuser
 - Grab your book and read for 15 minutes

The chart below gets filled out by each kid every night before bed. Their name goes at the top. If they are buying lunch, they write 'Buy'. This helps keep our morning routine running smoothly. If the snack they chose is a non-refrigerated snack, they can grab the snacks from the cabinet and place them into their snack bags and lunch bags before bed or in the morning.

Weekly Meal Schedule for -----

<i>Day</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Snack</i>
<i>Monday</i>			
<i>Tuesday</i>			
<i>Wednesday</i>			
<i>Thursday</i>			
<i>Friday</i>			
<i>Weekend</i>			

Planning nightly dinners takes a TON of stress off of our plates. My friend and Client, Nicole Meyer of Nibbles by Nic has developed an amazing Meal Planning Board to help take this burden off of busy moms. In a given week, it's up to us to plan for 21 meals. That's a lot of friggin meals. Her meal planning board comes with recipes and grocery lists that you can peel off the board and bring with you to the supermarket. Link:

If you're not up for making a purchase and want to try it out first, the schedule below is another example of a meal planning calendar that you can use.

I would recommend that you sit down as a family on Sunday nights and talk about the weekly schedule. In our house, we allow each kid to pick a meal that they'd like for dinner one night and they even get to help prep and cook it. We also try to incorporate fun family stuff on weekends like Make your own Pizza, Meal Mix Up (each kid picks a dish they want - one picks dinner, one picks a side and one picks dessert) and make your own Sushi - a big hit in our house.

Weekly Dinner Schedule

<i>Day</i>	<i>Meal</i>	<i>To Buy</i>	<i>Helper</i>
<i>Example Monday</i>	<i>Turkey Meatloaf Broccoli Alexa Fries</i>	<i>Turkey Meat Sauce Broccoli</i>	<i>Kid 1: Set Table & Dry Kid 2: Clear Table & Load Kid 3: Prep & Wash dishes</i>

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<i>Monday</i>			
<i>Tuesday</i>			
<i>Wednesday</i>			
<i>Thursday</i>			
<i>Friday</i>			
<i>Weekend</i>			

Need more guidance and support, email me at hayley@fostering101.com