**Routines**

***What an opportunity!***

***What is a routine?***

We all have routines. It is how we get things done, spend time together and have fun. Every family has its own unique routines. Routines help family members know who should do what, when, in what order and how often.

Some routines might be for things you do every day – for example, getting ready for bed. These routines might involve things like having a bath, putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, going to the toilet, reading a story and going to sleep. You do these in the same order each day.

Other routines can be weekly or occasional ones. Examples might be going to the park a few times a week, going to playgroup on Tuesdays, or doing the shopping on Wednesdays.

There’s no rule about how many or what kind of routines you should have. What works well for one family might be too strict and structured for another. The best routines will be the ones that suit you and your child, and that make your daily family life easier.

***What are benefits for my child?***

Routines help your child learn many different concepts and skills. When you use routines, your child doesn’t have to learn a new activity. Because your child already knows what will happen next, it is easier for him to make the connection between the activity and the communication about it. It is predictable and functional. Routines support your child in the following ways:

* Learning to anticipate
* Feeling safe when there is understanding
* Reduces stress in a predictable routine
* Helps your child organize his/her world

**What should be part of every routine?**

* a consistent beginning, middle and ending
* opportunities for your child to participate in the different steps of the routine
* a theme around which the routine is based—such as washing hands before dinner, feeding the dog, or playing a game
* the routine can be “talked” about using symbols, sign language, objects or whatever the targeted mode of communication is, out of context - distant in time and place
* always use your words paired with the targeted mode of communication

**Things to consider**

* If you don't have a routine for your child or have never tried one, start slowly.
* Try one or two schedules, such as a morning and a bedtime, and stick to them for at least two weeks.
* You will be less stressed, and more inclined to share quality time with your child.
* You will also see a difference in your child, they will be more organized, rested and prepared and this alone will make them more confident in themselves.
* Using a picture chart or object cues is a good way for children to see what they need to do.

Adapted materials created for *PROJECT SALUTE* a model demonstrated project funded by the U.S. Department of Education Grant #H324T990025 to California State University, Northridge from September 1, 1999 to August 30, 2004.