

Ten-Point Plan for a Mindful School Year For Kids and Their Parents

1. **Create breathing room in your schedule - literally** - Build time in at the beginning, middle, and end of your day to take a few deep breaths, focusing on the exhale. This will re-set your nervous system, calm your body and mind, and help you make better decisions. As much as possible, include your kids in this exercise.
2. **Treat yourself like an olympic athlete** - parenting requires long days, running from one “event” to the next. Make sure you treat yourself accordingly. “Train up” by eating small healthy meals often throughout the day, get enough rest and exercise. If this is a struggle, take some time to contemplate your schedule - what can you let go of to make time for your “training schedule?”
3. **Create transition space between each activity** - even if it’s sitting in the car for three minutes. A small break between each activity can make a big difference in the way you feel at the end of the day. **Try this:** At the end of each scheduled activity, take time to breathe or stretch. You might even come up with an internal affirmation, like: “It is good for me and my whole family if I take breaks to take care of myself.” After taking breaks like this, notice how you feel at the end of the day.
4. **Turn off all technology one hour before bed** - Make it a house rule that all electronics, including TVs and computers are turned off one hour before bed time. Make this a rule for kids *and* adults. The lights from electronic devices can delay sleep. By “unplugging” an hour before bed, you will improve the quality of your sleep.
5. **Once or twice a week, create a mindful meal** - It may be unrealistic to expect a calm and relaxed dinner every night of the week, but you can shoot for relaxation during one or two meals. **Try this:** make one meal a week a “mindful mealtime.” Turn off all electronics, dim the lights, light some candles. Make the meal easy and healthy, and give everyone an opportunity to talk about their day.
6. **Reexamine conflicts** - Is there something that you and your family perpetually argue about and causes unhappiness in your home? Work with your partner or hold a family meeting to reassess the rule or activity that is causing conflict. This may take more than one meeting so keep at it. Consider including a professional in this discussion if the conflict persists.
7. **Be counter culture** - Once a season, break your routine and do something radical. Go for a hike, visit a museum, try a new activity, even if it means breaking your regular commitments. It will be worth it to reconnect with your family.
8. **Consider limiting commitments to one activity per season (also counter-culture)** - There is no evidence that shows having your children enrolled in several activities at once will make them happier, more productive adults.
9. **Make time for gratitude** - Gratitude is a proven antidote to stress, take time each day to notice what is going right in your life.
10. **Reassess every season** - Four times a year, at the end of every season, take a look at your family’s health, happiness and well-being. Are there any changes that need to be made? This is an important exercise, and will prevent you from looking back in ten years asking yourself, how did I get here?

We wish you twenty minutes of mindfulness every day!

