

balance

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT GETTING AND STAYING ORGANIZED

FALL 2002

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ORGANIZING FUN!



plan a party



plan a road trip



7 QUICK TIPS FOR GETTING ORGANIZED

We have the organizing secrets of Nancy Lublin,

THE INCREDIBLY PASSIONATE AND TALENTED

founder of Dress for Success Worldwide

the wardrobe issue

- purge
- redesign
- store

OUR FIRST ANNUAL HOLIDAY GUIDE

it's never too early to start



Mornings can be difficult because there is a small window of time to pull so many pieces together. Try these tips to ease you into your day.

your good morning guide:

A foolproof plan for stress-free mornings

by **DEBORAH K. GUSOFF**
illustrations by **NATALIE PICKUP**

Rushing to get dressed, you discover your panty hose have a run. Pouring your coffee, you find someone used the last of the milk. As you drop your first-grader at school, she reminds you that she was supposed to bring her favorite book to share with the class and promptly dissolves into tears. Sound familiar?

The morning routine is often hectic at best and can escalate to stressful in a matter of minutes. Unexpected events seem to be the norm, from the middle-of-the-night power failure that causes your alarm to ring 45 minutes late to your dog escaping from his leash and leading you on a 15-minute chase through the neighborhood. Yet there are also components of your morning that happen every day, and you can take control of these. The key to keeping your mornings calm and balanced is organized preplanning.

the night before

Planning ahead is a guaranteed way to make your morning routine run more smoothly. The more you can do the night before, the less you will have to deal with in the morning. You'll have less stress and, with planning, you'll have time to deal with unexpected problems.

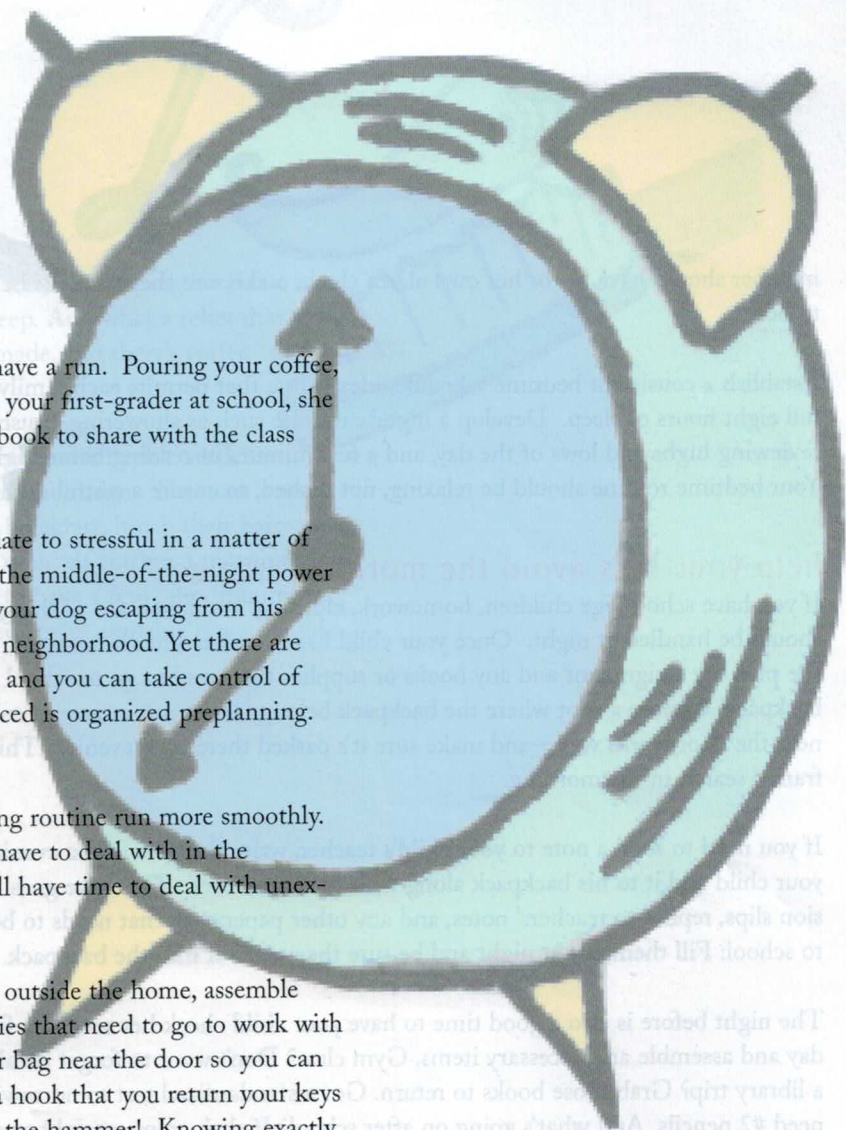
What will you need for your day tomorrow? If you work outside the home, assemble your briefcase or travel bag contents and any other supplies that need to go to work with you the evening before. Create a designated spot for your bag near the door so you can easily grab it on your way out. If you don't already have a hook that you return your keys to each time you enter the house, now's the time to grab the hammer! Knowing exactly where your keys are pre-empts a frantic search in the morning.

The night before is an ideal time to select the next day's outfits, for yourself and your kids as well. This gives you ample time to wash your son's favorite shirt or run to the store for panty hose.

After you clean up the dinner dishes, set the table for breakfast. Put out plates, glasses, cereal bowls, silverware, and daily vitamins or other medications. If breakfast usually consists of cereal, put the box on the table. Can't move without your java? Consider a coffeemaker with a timer: You can set it to begin brewing at a certain time, giving you a little extra motivation to resist hitting the snooze button. Keep nutritious, portable snacks like cereal bars or cheese sticks on hand for days when you're running really late.

almost bedtime

If there's something unusual about the next day (oops, is tomorrow your day to bring the donuts?), put a sticky-note on the inside of the door to remind you. Every family ►



member should have his or her own alarm clock; make sure they're all set before going to bed.

Establish a consistent bedtime schedule, ideally one that permits each family member a full eight hours of sleep. Develop a nightly routine such as showering, brushing teeth, reviewing highs and lows of the day, and a few minutes of reading before lights out. Your bedtime routine should be relaxing, not rushed, to ensure a restful night's sleep.

help your kids avoid the morning crazies

If you have school-age children, homework, clothing, and lunch are all things that should be handled at night. Once your child has completed her homework, make sure she puts the assignment and any books or supplies that need to go to school into her backpack. Choose a spot where the backpack belongs when not in use—a cubby or hook near the door works well—and make sure it's parked there each evening. This avoids a frantic search in the morning.

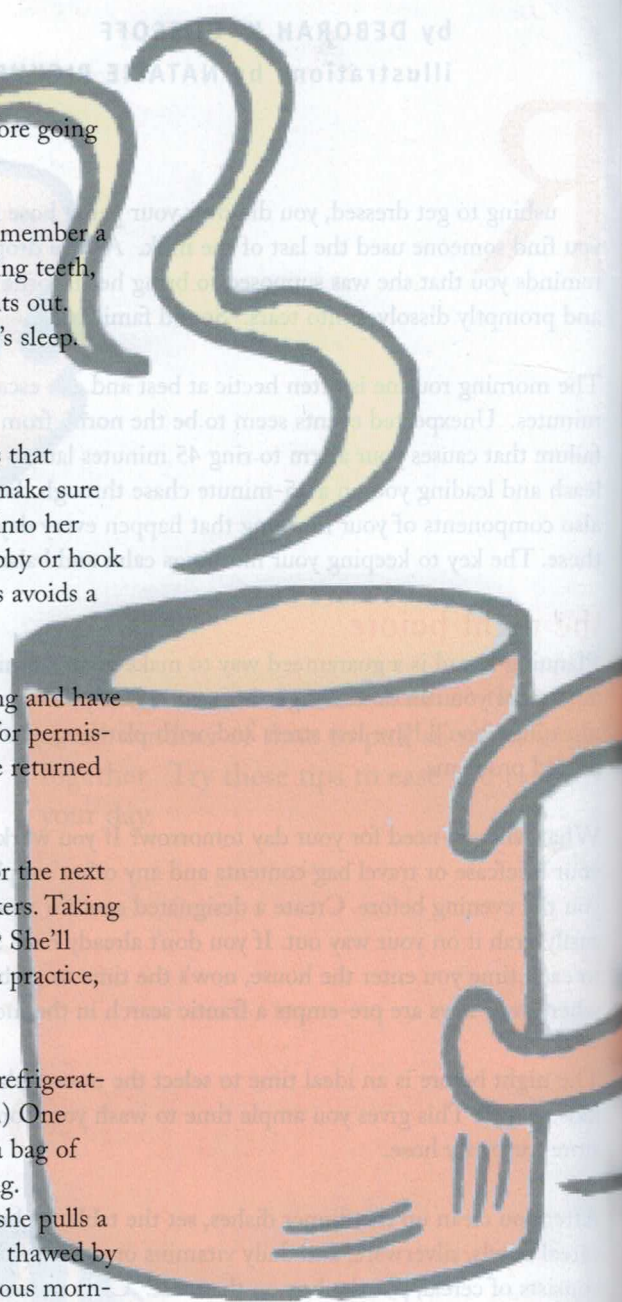
If you need to send a note to your child's teacher, write the note in the evening and have your child add it to his backpack along with his homework. The same goes for permission slips, replies to teachers' notes, and any other paperwork that needs to be returned to school: Fill them out at night and be sure they make it into the backpack.

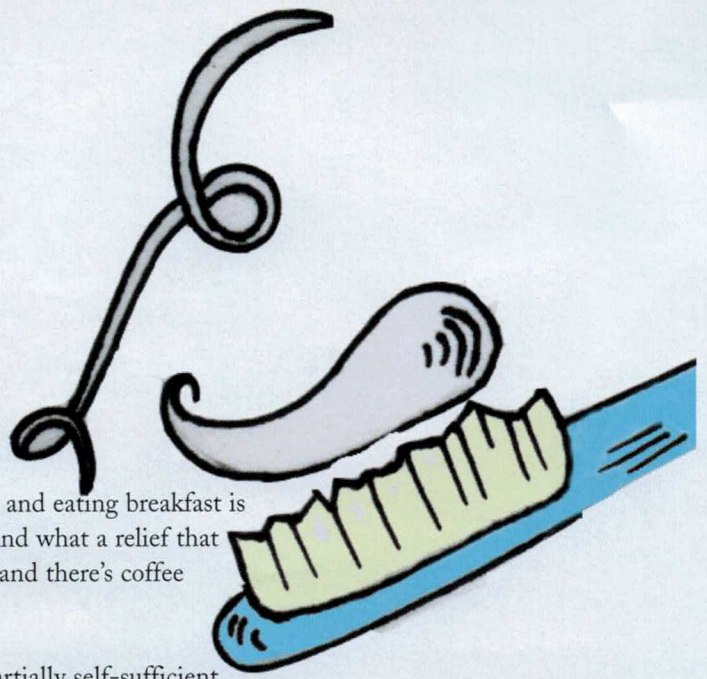
The night before is also a good time to have your child check her schedule for the next day and assemble any necessary items. Gym class? Don't want to forget sneakers. Taking a library trip? Grab those books to return. Got a standardized test tomorrow? She'll need #2 pencils. And what's going on after school? If she's going straight to a practice, rehearsal, or meeting, what else does she need to bring for that?

If your child takes a lunch to school, it should be made the night before and refrigerated. (While you're at it, if you need to take a lunch tomorrow, make yours too.) One mom sets out five paper bags on Sunday night, fills each one with a napkin, a bag of chips, a juice box, and an apple, then adds a sandwich to one bag each evening. Another mom makes and freezes a week's worth of sandwiches. Each night she pulls a frozen sandwich from the freezer and adds it to the lunch box; she swears it's thawed by lunchtime. If your child purchases lunch at school, you've probably lost precious morning minutes searching for cash. Instead, label five envelopes Monday through Friday and put exact change for the day's meal in each. Make adding an envelope part of the nightly backpack-stuffing routine. Even better, prepay a week's or month's worth of lunches and eliminate the daily concern.

the morning routine

You've prepared everything the night before, you've slept well, and now you're ready for





a stress-free morning. A routine for showering, brushing teeth, and eating breakfast is helpful when you're trying to function while still half-asleep. And what a relief that your clothes are ready, your bag is packed, your lunch is made, and there's coffee waiting for you!

If you're a parent and your kids are old enough to be at least partially self-sufficient, reduce morning hassles by posting their daily schedules on the fridge. They can consult the chart for reminders to get dressed, make the bed, eat breakfast, brush their hair and teeth, and grab their lunches before running out the door. If you are a morning person, you may want to wake up earlier than your child to have a few calm minutes to read the paper, drink your coffee, and get yourself ready so you're available if your child needs prodding.

You may want to ensure cooperation in the morning by offering younger children a reward if they accomplish everything in a timely fashion. For example, if everything is completed and there is time to spare, permit your child to watch 15 minutes of TV before leaving for school. A sticker chart can be especially enticing: Give your kid a star for each morning in which everything gets done stress-free, with the promise that five stars will earn him or her a special treat or outing with you.

stocking the launch pad

Once you're in the home stretch and almost ready to go, you don't want to have to run to an upstairs bedroom or bathroom for a last-minute tooth-brushing or button-sewing. To minimize tearing up and down the stairs, it makes sense to keep duplicates of some items close to the hub of morning activity. Put a second toothbrush in a downstairs bathroom for each family member, along with extra toothpaste and floss. Keep weather-contingent items like umbrellas and boots in a closet near the door rather than a distant bedroom closet so you can grab them easily when needed. Put together an "emergency kit" to keep in the kitchen or other easily accessible place in case something goes wrong in the morning. Include things such as threaded needles (one with black thread and one with white) for last-minute repairs; a can of Static Guard and a packet of Shout Wipes; and a bit of petty cash.

your investment tonight will pay off tomorrow

After a long day, who could blame you for wanting to do nothing but veg until bedtime? But consider the payoff: If you can muster just a little more energy before you hit the hay, you can get yourself organized for tomorrow and avoid A.M. aggravations.

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