

Routine Maintenance As A Stay-at-Home Parent

Description

Search the web or ask other stay-at-home parents around you and one of the first bits of advice youâ€™ll hear is â€œFind a routine!â€• This doesnâ€™t just apply to at-home parents, of course, itâ€™s absolutely vital for all parents.

As I moved away from my [full-time job at the office](#) into my new role as a stay-at-home dad, finding a routine was high on my list of priorities. Itâ€™s been two years now and I have been pretty good about sticking to a routine and not straying from my schedule. But, that doesnâ€™t make it a good routine.

For one thing, this created havoc on my brain when the weekend rolled around and Going Mom was home. Of course I love my wife through and through, but I was thrown off and would find that I had trouble managing this for a whileâ€¦ a *long* while. Some days Iâ€™m not sure how she even put up with me, and some days she didnâ€™t. I deserved it.

The weekends were bad enough, but going on a trip was even worse sometimes. Yeah, it was vacation, a time to cut loose and relax, but I had so much trouble enjoying the time because it simply was not *my* routine. There were other factors like finding acceptable food and whatnot, but getting out of my comfort zone (i.e. routine) was the big culprit.

Iâ€™d fight with myself saying to just enjoy time with friends and family, as that makes sense, but Iâ€™d still have trouble. As time passed, my stress management from daily, weekly, and monthly changes had me on an emotional rollercoaster. I made myself miserable.

If I couldnâ€™t workout at the same time, go on walks at the same time for the same distance, cook meals for my family, vacuum the house, get Avery down for a nap at the same time, prepare dinner, and then kiss the girls goodnight as I sat up too late on the computer, there would be a stress bomb exploding in my head. All because this â€œsacredâ€• routine was broken. As a result, Iâ€™d be cranky, snap at my wife or daughter for petty reasons, and simply no fun to be around.

I would talk to my wife about it every now and then, but never letting out all of my feelings. Finally, I broke down and let it all out telling her how everything got to me and how much I hated being like this but didnâ€™t know what to do. Being the loving, caring, and pretty much always right wife that she is, she gave me an ultimatum.

Start meditating, doing yoga, or something to better manage my stress, or within three weeks, I would need actually seek help from a doctor about my stress. Whoa, doctors? No thanks, seeing enough of them for [my shoulder](#) as is, and I refuse to resort to prescription meds as a way to cover up the stress and anxiety.

Weâ€™ve had similar talks before where I said I needed to change, but they rarely lasted longer than a month. But this last time was different, and everything had built up more than ever, so I committed to make changes for the better.

I used to start my day by waking up right as Going Mom left for work. I'd then get Avery up and fed as I prepared dinner for the night and lunch for my wife to take to work the next day. Most of the time, I'd fail to get much food for myself, and then proceed to try and get in a workout with Avery in the garage. Trying to perform a set of heavy squats with a screaming toddler behind you is enough to drive monks up-the-wall-insane, which only further exacerbated my already high stress levels.

I'd finally eat after Avery went down for a nap and then plan on eating mostly late at night when everyone went to sleep. This meant staying up late and getting little sleep for myself. Thanks to my wife and the help of [Shawn Stevenson's book *Sleep Smarter*](#), I find the main cause of my routine stress; SLEEP.

Going Mom had a simple solution, try going to sleep earlier. Whoa, mind blowing! I've thought of doing it before, but held on so dearly to "my time" at night and just didn't want to change. Well, I pushed my selfish thoughts off to give it a try.

Instead of staying up to stare at the computer for a couple hours at night, I went to sleep the same time as my wife. Here's the kicker, I woke up earlier feeling better than before, had some tea/coffee, and got my workout in before Avery woke up. The fear of missing a workout is a big concern for me, so taking care of that right off the bat immediately puts me in a more relaxed state.

From there, I have a just enough time to prepare breakfast for Avery and myself before I get her up. Then we eat at the same time and have time after to actually do more without me stressing out so much. This has been going on for just over a week and I notice I feel much better/happier than I have in a long time.

Do I still get stressed? Of course, it's completely normal to get stressed, in fact, it's part of how we as humans have survived, but chronic stress can literally kill us. Not because of a saber tooth tiger, but from work, family issues, body image, traffic, etc.

Needless to say, making just one change in my routine has lead to having a more fulfilling day with my daughter and wife. I have plenty of minor details to work out, but sleeping earlier and smarter has solved the bulk of my issues. Having that stress-free time in the day to have genuine fun with my wife and daughter is something I will cherish forever.



Thatâ€™s what really matters. Missing a workout is no big deal, and I know it, so hopefully Iâ€™ll work on fully accepting it when that time comes knowing Iâ€™ll be able to jump right back on board soon again.

If youâ€™re having trouble with your current routine, try and find the one thing that will lead to many more positive changes throughout the course of the day. For me, sleep was the big one, maybe it is for you too. Whatever the case, seek it out and change for the better. Trust me, you and your friends and family will be happy you did.

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