

## **Managing Parenthood and Your Career: Getting Out the Door**

*by Ann Skoczenski, PhD, Program Manager, Center for Faculty Development*

Have you wondered if there are better ways to manage the morning and get your family and yourself out the door to work/school/daycare? On October 22, 2014, a group of MGH faculty gathered to discuss this topic. The following panelists shared their points of view and ideas with the audience.

- Ingrid Bassett, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor of Medicine
- Paola Divieti-Pajevic, MD, PhD, Associate Professor of Medicine
- Ann Kao, MD, Instructor in Medicine
- Ann Skoczenski, PhD, Program Manager, Center for Faculty Development (moderator)

The panelists talked about their experiences from their varied work backgrounds (a hospitalist, a basic scientist and a clinician-scientist) and the different ages of their children, ranging from infants to teenagers. In spite of this diversity, some themes emerged. The following are tips distilled from the engaging discussion:

- Prepare as much as possible the night before, including clothing, lunches, permission slips, etc. Check everyone’s calendar and the weather, so you know what is coming up. Get kids as involved as possible in this (prepping lunches and backpacks, picking out clothes).
- Create a “launch pad” near the door. This can be a bin, basket, or even just a small dedicated area where you gather things that you need to go out the door: diaper bags, briefcases, lunches, music instruments, hats and gloves... put them all on the launch pad and they will be there for you to grab on the way out.
- Protect your kids’ bedtime. Set a schedule and stick to it. This will ensure they have had enough sleep to face the morning with energy and a good mood.
- Wake up before your kids and do as much as possible to get yourself ready. But avoid the “black hole” of checking email during this time.
- Start your kids’ day with a cuddle and some time that is just for them. Schedule this into your routine – even five dedicated minutes can be enough to re-connect and give your children the emotional support they need for the morning routine.
- Create a routine that kids can count on. Children thrive on consistency and routine, so if they know what comes next (first cuddles, second get dressed, then breakfast, etc) they will be more able to stay on schedule.
- Give your kids responsibility for part of their own morning routine, whatever is appropriate for their developmental stage. Accept imperfection, they are just learning to take on responsibility.
- Accept imperfection in yourself too – it’s okay to have a messy house.
- Use music, timers, “races,” or whatever works to motivate your kids through the morning routine.

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- Don't skip breakfast, but it's okay to make it portable if you only have time to eat it in the car: a smoothie in a travel cup or a PB&J makes a fine breakfast.
- Give your kids departure warnings (5 minutes, 2 minutes, "when this song ends"). This will make the final transition easier.
- Be calm and consistent: kids thrive on consistency and routine, and they pick up on your stress.
- Have another good hug before you head out the door.

These are just some tips that will help you think about how to make your mornings easier. Many other parents have thought about and written about this topic. These articles have additional tips and tricks for getting out the door, you're sure to find some that work for your family.

- <http://www.ahaparenting.com/parenting-tools/family-life/kids-morning-routine>
- [http://www.babycenter.com/101\\_15-tips-for-getting-the-kids-out-the-door-fast-and-to-school\\_10347624.bc](http://www.babycenter.com/101_15-tips-for-getting-the-kids-out-the-door-fast-and-to-school_10347624.bc)
- <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/how-to-get-the-kids-out-the-door-in-the-morning.html>
- <http://www.parenting.com/gallery/de-stress-your-morning-routine>