

Mindful parenting

SHIRLEY PASTIROFF, counsellor, parent coach and mum of five, shares her insights into the importance of setting boundaries.

A few years ago our mornings were awful. I would wake up every day already anxious about the repeatedly ignored instructions, the arguing, and the meltdowns that were likely to occur before we got out of the house. I started working with what I now call 'natural results'.

I looked at what the children needed to do, and which of those tasks had a natural result that affected them and which didn't. Getting dressed, doing their hair, packing what they needed for the day, eating breakfast and making their lunch were the ones with natural results: they would be going to school in their pyjamas, looking a bit of a mess, missing out on activities that they weren't prepared for, and being hungry at school. Making their beds was the only one without a natural result that they would care about, so I dropped that job off the list.

We had a meeting in which I explained I wasn't going to nag them anymore, as none of us were enjoying it. I let them know that I knew they were quite capable of getting themselves ready, and I was just getting in the way. I said my job was to wake them, make sure there was food for breakfast and lunches, make lunch for the younger two, and leave the house with all of them with me; the rest was up to them. I also let them know I'd happily take them however ready they were – you have to mean this part to say it, as you may have to follow through. None of it was said in a warning tone. Throughout all of it, I was genuinely owning my responsibility for having approached our mornings really unhelpfully for everyone, including myself.

It has been one of the most significant changes in our home. The kids loved it, and so did I. The beds didn't get made, but that was a small price to pay for doing nothing in the mornings except getting myself ready and watching them mostly just get on with it. If they didn't eat breakfast, I said nothing. If they didn't do their hair, I said nothing. If they didn't get dressed, I said nothing. I did offer little reminders like, "We'll be going in about ten minutes... Are you sure you don't mind being hungry at school? Are you sure you're happy to go in your pyjamas?" But that was all.



They worked out for themselves why they get dressed and why they eat. Sometimes, they found out the hard way. They got hungry by morning tea because they hadn't had breakfast. They didn't love looking a mess at school or rushing, half-dressed, out of the door. It only happened a few times, and they got used to what they needed to do to avoid these scenarios.

Sometimes there were mishaps but what intrigued me was that they started to apologise for forgetting, and asking if I could wait while they grabbed a sandwich, or could we go back, "because I've forgotten my swim things." Sometimes we could and sometimes we couldn't, but their language had changed, and I could tell they were beginning to take responsibility for their own morning routine.

Shirley Pastiroff is a counsellor, mindfulness trainer and parent coach. She has trained thousands of parents in the techniques described in her book, *The Mindful Parent*, and now works across the education and commercial sectors as well as with individuals and families.

renewyourmind.co.nz/
themindfulparent

"I am frequently asked how on earth we can raise resilient and happy children in the over-scheduled and busy world we live in today. The answer is Mindful Parenting. Here, Shirley Pastiroff outlines simple and effective practices that are loaded with meaning and power and serve to achieve exactly that – happy and resilient relationships. Her practical and down to earth style makes this easily achievable for parents."

Nathan Wallis, neuroscience educator

Sleep safe, MY BABY

SIDS and Kids New Zealand is dedicated to saving the lives of babies and children during pregnancy, birth, infancy and childhood and

supporting bereaved families. The organisation delivers on its vision through world class research, evidence-based education and bereavement support, and advocacy.

Remind everyone who cares for your child:

- + Sleep baby on their back
- + Keep head and face uncovered

- + Keep baby smoke-free before and after birth
- + Safe sleeping environment night and day
- + Sleep baby in safe cot in parents' room

SIDS and Kids provides a range of safe sleeping education and support services as well as a national 24-hour sudden infant death helpline 0800 164 455 / sidsandkids.org.nz