

The Nine Most Important Minutes of Your Child's Day

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Did you know that your child's emotional health can be largely impacted by the way you guide them in key moments throughout their day? Affective Neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp explains that "Positive emotional systems... capture cognitive spaces, leading to their broadening, cultivation and development....As a general principle, the larger the sphere of influence of the positive emotions, the more likely is the child to become a productive and happy member of society."

So, how do you create a healthy emotional system for your child to develop in?

Here are the 9 Most Important Minutes of Your Child's Day:

- the first three minutes—right after they wake up
- the three minutes after they come home from school, and
- the last three minutes of the day—before they go to bed

So, instead of pulling the covers off and rushing, could you spend 3 minutes waking up together? Or running downstairs to sit and start breakfast together? Maybe when your child gets home from school, instead of running to the TV or homework, walk to get the mail together. Find a way that works with you to spend these 9 tiny minutes together!

Because all children experience so much throughout the course of a given day, a great way to promote emotional health and processing is to capture your child's attention and make an emotional investment at these key times.

Optimize the time:

- For young child who doesn't speak yet, spend time looking at books, singing, talking softly, or cuddling.
- Ask open-ended questions and, as your child responds, guide them to use "feeling" words to describe their experiences.
- When you go to check the mail and notice the falling leaves or new buds along the way.
- How about a back-scratch or a shoulder massage for your preteen?

It's important to remember that a great parent makes the most of the little moments. I challenge you to try this for one month and see what nine minutes a day can do!

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." -Mother Theresa