



## Homework Hysteria to Homework Harmony

Homework time can prove to be quite challenging and extremely stressful. Coach Adina offers the following tips and strategies in order to make homework time more manageable while providing tools and structure to allow your children to become successful independent learners.

### 1. Set Expectations

Children need to know what we expect of them – there must be a plan. There is no magical answer in achieving success during homework time. A structured, well-defined plan between parent and child will help children understand the steps that will empower them to accomplish their homework. Different children need alternative plans, depending on the child’s personality, strengths and challenges and ages. The plan should be in writing so that the child can see it, understand it and then feel accomplished when successfully followed. It can be in the form of a chart, list or pictures. By providing the proper structure when our children are young, we allow them to become independent thinkers and learners as they advance in skill and age.

### 2. Brief Down Time

It’s a long day in school!!! It requires emotional and physical energy for a child to cope and succeed both academically and socially. Children come home and you are the “safe place to fall”. They will vent and at times be moody and this is normal! The goal of the parent or caretaker is to listen, connect and support the child emotionally before they begin their homework. In order to be emotionally available the child needs to reenergize by refueling with positive fuel and energy. Also-healthy food, rest, a good night sleep is critical for thinking skills and coping strategies both in school and at home!!!

### 3. Proper Environment

In order for a child to succeed during homework time, providing the proper physical environment is crucial. Children need to have a dedicated space that is clutter-free with the proper supplies available. The environment should be as quiet as possible and free of distractions (no background TV, loud music, etc.)

### 4. Planned Breaks

Depending on the amount of subjects and homework, many children need breaks built into their homework routine – for instance, every half hour there could be a 10 minute break. Examples of taking a break include listening to music, jumping on the trampoline, punching a punching bag, drawing/playing with clay/play dough, jumping rope, playing an instrument, snacking on cut up vegetables, setting the table, yoga, or just lying down and relaxing.

Some children may prefer not taking breaks as they thrive from staying focused. A child who is motivated enough and wishes to complete all their tasks without breaks, of course, should be commended.

Older children may have a lot of homework and studying so dinner needs to be part of this evening schedule. Protein is really important for our children – it will provide them with strength when they are tired from a long day.



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### 5. Parent /Caretaker Involvement

In the early grades our children really need us to support and guide them through homework. By the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade the goal is that most of our children are capable of doing their homework on their own with you close by. When an assignment seems difficult for a child it is important to review the directions with them and if necessary to have your child feel more secure, do the first example together. If you believe your child has the skills needed to proceed, then have them do a couple of examples by themselves. The child then builds up their confidence and will usually be able to complete most of it on their own. Providing occasional help, being there to support their efforts and even brainstorming ideas with them, is very helpful and will hopefully build up the child's confidence enough and nurture their independence.

### 6. Discuss their Difficulties

If a subject or specific skill is difficult and your child becomes frustrated, it is important to allow them to talk or even cry about how they feel. It is natural to try to protect your child from these hurt feelings but it is much better to acknowledge these feelings, perhaps reflect back to things that were difficult for you as a child or even as an adult and NORMALIZE their feelings. Very often, they think they are the only ones having difficulty – I have heard this hundreds of times from students and my own children. Explain to them that although this is really difficult after we practice and work really hard – and that it is OK to have to work hard, maybe even harder than others – in the end your child will overcome his difficulties and be stronger from all their hard work!!! With the right approach the child learns that even when things are tough instead of shutting down, we all need to work harder and harder!!!! This important lesson builds up your child in real ways that will allow for their authentic growth in learning and life.

### 7. Partnering with your Child's Teacher

If a child is taking a very long time to do their homework and/or they do not understand the concept or skills needed – this is the time to be in touch with your child's teacher. By communicating with the teachers and letting them know what is going on with your child, you can work together to figure out how to overcome these challenges. Homework is an important part of your child's educational experience and teachers welcome the chance to provide guidance and support. Creating a partnership gives your child the best chance at success in all his academic endeavors.

***Adina Lederer is an ACPI CCPF (Certified Coach for Parents and Families) who works with parents and children to develop effective skills and strategies to deal with life's daily challenges. Drawing on her experiences as a parent, teacher and coach, Adina empowers parents to define and realize both short and long term goals in order to bring more harmony and balance to her client's family life. To learn more about Coach Adina and all the services she offers, please visit her website at <http://www.coachadina.com>.***