



# Back to School Checklist

- ❑ Start with Purpose. What do you value as a family? What are the critical acts that you will not let be deleted from your family's lineup? What will you do to help insure the "juggling elephants" routine doesn't become a part of your family.
- ❑ Calendars. Is there a master family calendar so that each family member can check the lineup daily? Does each family member of the appropriate age have a calendar they can keep with them? Is a process in place to insure that acts don't "get lost" because they are added to one calendar, but not the master family calendar? Try having a family planning session where each member (no matter the age) is able to talk about what they have coming up during the week and where they might need help/support.
- ❑ Work schedules. Even though it's only August, you know school events will soon affect your schedule at work from time to time. Have you begun planning how things will continue smoothly in your office or work area when you are away? Identify 1-2 potential "stand in" performers who can act on your behalf when you are out.
- ❑ Setting expectations. Do all the "performers" in your circus know their job? Family members as young as 4 can help with tasks around the house. Are there clearly defined times to get up, eat breakfast, have dinner and go to bed?
- ❑ Get a timer. While it may seem simplistic, use a timer to help children manage their practice time, time on computer, video games, TV, homework, etc. It helps avoid the frequent interruption when someone asks, "How much longer?"
- ❑ Morning routine. Our attitudes for the day are heavily influenced by the first few minutes of the day. Are you doing your part to foster their positive attitude so their circus goes smoothly? In the evening, try planning for the next day. Make lunches and put them in the refrigerator, sign notes and permission slips, make sure homework is done. Mornings can be crazy enough without everyone scrambling and screaming to get out the door in time. Get kids to bed early and up a little earlier so that they have time to get everything done without being rushed.
- ❑ Avoid "over programming" of your children. Ask yourself why you have enrolled your children in extracurricular activities. Are they stressed and have too much going on? Sometimes you have to help children choose between several good "acts." Trying to "do it all" can add stress on you and your child – not to mention add a financial burden. Also, build

in time in your child's line up for unstructured activities, leisure play and adequate time for family activities.

- ❑ Avoid “over programming” of yourself. Clubs, schools and other organizations will soon be contacting you about volunteering or taking a leadership role in one or more events. Have you set limits on what you will say “yes” to? Have you built time in your schedule to spend quality time with your family AND individual family members? How about time for yourself? There are always unexpected acts that can show up at any time-have you allowed room in your schedule to handle them?
- ❑ Plan a weekly family intermission. With all the stress placed on the family unit during the school year, make sure you build in a designated time for the family to take some time off together and “clown around.” Play board or card games or plan some time at a local park-the key is that you are ALL together with no other expectation than to enjoy each other, relax, and have fun.
- ❑ Be a good general manager. Reflect on each family member. What do they need to be successful this year individually? What can you do to help? Chances are if they are successful and happy, your circus will run more smoothly as well.
- ❑ Plan meals in advance. “What’s for dinner?” can be one of the most disconcerting questions asked by a family member. A lack of planning usually also leads to meals that are less healthy and more expensive. Solve the dining dilemma by planning meals for the coming week on the weekend. Get the entire family’s input and assign preparation of the meals to different family members.
- ❑ Prepare and eat a meal together as often as possible. Take the time to sit down and ask your children about their day -dinner is the perfect time to do this. Go around the table and have everyone talk about their “highs and lows.” What was the highlight of the day? What was the low point of the day? Just listen. You will be surprised at the amount of information that is shared around the dinner table and how this will become “the high” of the day.
- ❑ Turn off the TV! Television to children is like fire to a moth – they are drawn to it no matter what is on. You may have to sacrifice some of your favorite shows but removing the distraction is well worth it. Get a DVR (like TiVo) to record your favorites and watch them on the weekends or after the children have gone to bed.
- ❑ Get involved in your children’s lives. Ask them if they want help with their homework. Offer to have their friends over for a “late over” or “sleep over.” Volunteer to participate in the carpool. Attend and support them in their extracurricular activities. This will take some planning on your part. But a good realization of your purpose and where your family falls in your priorities will help you determine what acts can be removed from your lineup to accomplish this. It takes work but it is worth it.