

# RHYTHM OVER ROUTINE

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I can be the queen of all or none. I get really into my work and I neglect my house, health, and family. I get really into quality time with my family, and I neglect my work and other responsibilities. You get the point. Can you relate?

If I'm not intentional, these patterns turn into bad habits with severe consequences. One of the biggest consequences is a negative impact on my mental health and my family's mental health.

In the past, I've created schedules and routines. They always start off great, but when life happens and those schedules get broken, I find myself stressed and depressed.

Then I heard about rhythms.

A rhythm is like a schedule, but less detailed. There are anchor points, but not set times for each activity. There are daily rhythms, weekly rhythms, seasonal rhythms, and family rhythms.





A rhythm is an intentional flow to your days, a way to control your life without rigid agendas or instructions. It's the activities we do day in and day out, lifeblood of the day, the rituals that make up our family culture on a daily basis. It's a recognition of the way things tend to go for us in terms of activities and organizing life a bit around that.

There are many things which we should do day in and day out no matter what because they meet our family's basic needs (such as cooking, housework, eating meals, brushing teeth, and sleeping). But a daily rhythm should definitely include things that support a healthy mind, body, and spirit as well as connection and play.

A list of activities is not a rhythm. A daily rhythm is an intentional flow to the day, so the order in which you do things matters. This doesn't mean that every day looks exactly the same. A strong rhythm is -- conducive to the way you live your life.

Think about it—rhythm is like breathing, and breathing in is different from breathing out.

When we breathe in, we are gathering our resources, refueling, or making connections (think quieter activities such as sleep, alone time, reading, or meals). When we breathe out, we are engaging, exploring, learning new things, or communicating (think being active, social activities, or being in our community). Both aspects of breathing have a purpose and happen in rhythm. Think about your daily life.

Does it make more sense for you to work out right after you wake up since you're dragging and it would energize you? Or would it make more sense to start with a devotion or journaling, based on how you generally feel in the morning? Just go with your instinct and aim for alternating times of outwardly engaged activity and inwardly processing activity. When these parts feel right, everything fits into place.

What about at work or in other situations outside the home where you have less control? Even at work you may begin to recognize the best time for responding to emails or returning calls and the best time to step away for a break and the best time to schedule meetings. Start to establish your own rhythms within your

work day to reclaim your time.

Getting the flow just right can take some time and tweaking, so be patient with yourself. Here are a few guidelines for getting started with a rhythm:

DAILY

1. Start by writing down what is most important for your family. What are the things which have to happen every day? What are the things that help your family thrive, or you love so much you want them to happen every day? Is there anything you want to eliminate from your schedule to make your days more peaceful?
2. Decide which daily activities need to happen at approximately the same time each day. For many families, this includes meals, resting times, and morning and bedtime routines. Those are your anchor points, the activities which anchor your rhythm and provide the basic outline of your day.
3. Add in the rest of your daily activities. Try to alternate more active and more focused times of day.
4. Grab your "Daily Rhythm" template and plug these things in. Add it to your journal and/or hang it in a place



“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”

~ Annie Dillard

1. you can see it for reference.

WEEKLY

1. Think about what you tend to do already on a weekly basis. Can you assign activities to certain days to bring them into rhythm? Is there anything you would like to add into your week? Is there anything you can take away which doesn't match your priorities for yourself and your family?
2. Think about expression. What kind of practical, artistic, movement, or community activities will meet your needs and can you assign those to a

certain day of the week?

3. Think about the work you need to do each week in your home, your planning, and errands. Can these activities be brought into a weekly rhythm?
4. Feel this out for a while and get into a comfortable weekly rhythm yourself before you bring it into consciousness for your family. When you feel that your rhythm is running smoothly, you can start referring to each day of the week with its new special name (“Baking Day”, “Cleaning Day,” “Grocery Shopping Day,” etc.). Chances are your family already has sensed the rhythm of the week and they will enjoy having a name for it.
5. Grab your “The Weekly” template and plug these things in. Add it to your journal and/or hang it in a place you can see it for reference.

SEASONAL

1. Grab your “Seasonal” template. For each season, write down your favorite things about the season, favorite qualities, activities, or memories. Also write down any family traditions, festivals, or holidays for each season and

anything you would love to do with your loved ones.

2. Each time the seasons begin to shift, take time to consider your daily and weekly rhythms. What is supporting your family and what needs adjusting? What has changed since you started the current season? How can your rhythm best reflect the upcoming season?
3. Try to spend time outside every day, just noticing, being there, and allowing yourself to develop a relationship with the natural world.
4. Begin to build up traditions that are truly meaningful to you. Find things that are exciting, connecting, nourishing, and meaningful for your own family!

Above all, use rhythm as one of your tools for you and your family's overall health, especially your mental health. You aren't a robot or taskmaster standing there with a stopwatch or rushing through a schedule. You are a beautiful woman created with purpose, meant to live, laugh, and love (to name just a few). When you create a rhythm for you and your family, you are creating connection, peace, and freedom.

