moms OF TWEENS & TEENS

WORKSHOP 2

Helping Our Tweens & Teens Build Routines That Work

A practical guide to scaffolding skills—without Mom becoming the system

THE MIDDLE GROUND

Support them enough to succeed today—then gradually step back as their skills grow.

What Is Scaffolding?

Scaffolding is the middle ground between doing everything for our kids and expecting them to figure it all out alone. We provide just enough support, structure, or guidance for them to practice a skill successfully. As their ability grows, we gradually remove that support so they can carry more responsibility on their own.

Our tweens and teens may know what they are supposed to do and still struggle to do it consistently—especially when ADHD or executive-functioning challenges are part of the picture. Knowing and doing are two different skills.

THE CORE QUESTION

What skill is missing—and what support would help my child develop it?

A More Helpful Lens

"Kids do well if they can."

Ross Greene's idea invites us to trade judgment for curiosity. Instead of "They're lazy," "They don't care," or "They should know this by now," ask: Where are they getting stuck? A lagging skill—not a lack of character—may be driving the problem.

The Goal

We are not creating routines so we can manage our kids better. We are creating routines that help our kids learn to manage themselves: to plan, remember, start, manage time, solve problems, adjust, and try again.

KEEP THIS IN MIND

Mom doesn't always have to be the reminder. Replace your voice with a system whenever you can.

The Five-Step Scaffolding Framework

Start small. Support the weak skill—not the whole child. Then practice, adjust, and step back.

1 | PICK ONE ROUTINE

Choose the place with the most tension, nagging, or energy drain.

- Where are we getting stuck most often?
- What one change would make daily life feel lighter?
- What does my tween or teen think would help?

TRY THIS: Morning, homework, bedtime, chores, technology, or getting to an activity—pick one, not all of them.

2 | START WITH THE NON-NEGOTIABLE AND WORK BACKWARD

Name the fixed endpoint, then help your child see the steps and the time that come before it.

- What must happen, and by what time?
- What needs to happen immediately before that?
- How long will each step realistically take?

TRY THIS: If school departure is 7:30, work backward from 7:30 together. You are teaching planning—not handing down a schedule.

3 | GET THE ROUTINE OUT OF YOUR HEAD

If the routine lives only in your head, you become the alarm, clock, calendar, checklist, and reminder system.

- What could do the remembering instead of me?
- Where should the plan be visible?
- What objects need a consistent home?

TRY THIS: Move the routine into the environment: a checklist, phone alarm, whiteboard, visual schedule, charging station, or drop zone.

4 | FIND WHERE THEY'RE GETTING STUCK

Different problems need different supports. Diagnose the breakdown before adding help.

- Do they know, remember, start, manage time, stay focused, and follow through?
- Is the routine realistic?
- What is the smallest weak skill here?

TRY THIS: Add support where the skill is weak—not everywhere. A teen who loses track of time may need a timer, not a parent managing the whole morning.

5 | PRACTICE AND GRADUALLY REMOVE YOURSELF

A new routine is a skill to rehearse, not a switch to flip.

- Point them back to their system instead of repeating every step.
- Review what worked, where they got stuck, and what needs to change.
- Reduce your support as the routine becomes more reliable.

TRY THIS: When the routine falls apart, don't take over. Treat the breakdown as useful information and adjust the system together.

When a Routine Isn't Working

Before you remind, rescue, lecture, or take over, pause and diagnose the skill gap.

CHECK	ASK	POSSIBLE SUPPORT
☐ **KNOW**	Do they understand what to do and what "done" looks like?	Clarify the expectation; model one example.
☐ **REMEMBER**	Can they hold the steps in mind at the right time?	Checklist, alarm, visual cue, calendar notification.
☐ **START**	Can they begin without feeling overwhelmed?	Name the first tiny action; body-double briefly.
☐ **TIME**	Can they estimate, track, and transition on time?	Timer, visible clock, countdown alarms, work backward.
☐ **FOCUS**	Can they stay with the task despite distractions?	Change the environment; use Focus mode; move the phone.
☐ **REALISTIC**	Does the plan fit their capacity, sleep, schedule, and actual pace?	Simplify, add margin, move tasks to the night before.

Practical Scaffolding Ideas

Remembering	Phone alarms • calendar alerts • mirror checklist • backpack list
Seeing time	Visible clock • timer • countdown alarms • backward plan
Getting started	Name the first tiny step • lay materials out • brief co-start
Managing distractions	Phone charges outside bedroom • Focus mode • clear workspace
Keeping track of things	Basket by the door • labeled home for keys/shoes • charging station
Preparing ahead	Pack the bag at night • attach a checklist to the sports bag • set clothes out

The Progression

COACH	SCAFFOLD	PRACTICE	ADJUST	STEP BACK

Example: Rebuilding the Morning Routine

The old pattern: Mom is the alarm, clock, checklist, and reminder system. By 7:30, everyone is stressed.

TIME	WORKING BACKWARD
7:30	Leave
7:25	Shoes + backpack + Chromebook
7:10	Finish breakfast
7:00	Get dressed
6:50	Bathroom + hair
6:40	Wake up

Build It Together—at a Calm Time

- "Mornings aren't working well for either of us. Let's create something that works better."
- Ask: What part is hardest? Where do you get stuck? What would help?
- Agree on systems: perhaps the phone stays charging until they are ready, the backpack is packed at night, and alarms cue transitions.
- Agree on your role: perhaps one reminder at 7:15—then let the system have a chance to work.
- After a few days, review and adjust together.

INSTEAD OF FIVE REMINDERS

"Check your morning plan." Then, as the system becomes reliable, say less.

Today's Assignment: Pick One Struggle

Don't overhaul everything. Pick one place where you repeatedly remind, nag, rescue, or do it for them. Get curious and start there.

1. ONE STRUGGLE

Where are we getting stuck most often?

2. MISSING SKILL

What skill may be weak—remembering, planning, starting, time, focus, organization, or problem-solving?

3. SCAFFOLDING SUPPORT

What could support that skill without me becoming the system?

Next: Workshop 3

LESS NAGGING. MORE OWNERSHIP: RAISING INDEPENDENT STUDENTS

Today we built the scaffolding. Next, we'll talk about when—and how—to begin taking it down: stepping back, allowing appropriate consequences, and handing ownership to our kids without abandoning them.