

10 Tips for Balancing Parenting and Work



Have you ever wondered how you can make mornings with kids run more smoothly? Struggled with balancing work with sick children, or wished you had more time to yourself to simply relax, read a book or drink a whole cup of tea or coffee before it goes cold?

Here are 10 tips to help busy parents successfully juggle parenting and work:

- **Create and follow consistent routines:** When there's a set morning, after-school and/or evening routine at home, children know what to expect. For example, same wake-up time each morning, breakfast at 7.30 am, dressed, and hair and teeth brushed by 8 am. Snack after school followed by homework and outside play. Evening routines could include a regular bath or shower time, some quiet time for winding down, games or bedtime stories, bonding as a family by sharing about the day's highlights and disappointments, and having a regular bed time - the earlier the better.
- **Get up before your kids:** Unless your kids are up regularly at 5 am or earlier, getting up before them allows you to have some quiet moments to yourself. Use this time to exercise, meditate, take a shower and get yourself dressed and ready for your day, or at least to have a quiet cup of tea or coffee.
- **Lay out your kids' clothes (as well as your own) for tomorrow the night before:** This not only saves time organising what your kids will wear in the morning, but can prevent arguments about what to wear.
- **Pack school bags and lunches the night before too:** As far as you can, pre-pack whatever you can, choose and write out lunch orders, find change for the canteen, book club orders, excursions, fundraisers and the like.
- **Keep breakfast simple:** You can lay out plates, glasses and cutlery ready for breakfast the night before. Stick to easy and portable choices too, like fruit, yoghurt, smoothies, juices, toast or cereal. Save bacon and eggs, waffles, muffins or pancakes for weekends!
- **Teach your kids to do as much as they can for themselves:** This includes getting dressed, brushing their hair, applying sunscreen, making their bed, their lunch or getting their own breakfast. This allows them to feel more independent and frees up your time too.
- * **When kids get sick:** Decide in advance how you as parents will share this responsibility. You might choose to split the child care responsibilities on any one day with your partner, a grandparent or anyone else who can look after your child at short notice. If your child will be sleeping you can possibly do some work tasks from home.
- * **Dinner time:** Make kid-friendly meals in advance that can be frozen and re-heated on demand, so you don't need to cook meals when you get home after work - such as soups, garlic bread, pasta dishes, meatballs and curries. By the way, there is nothing wrong with children having breakfast - bacon and eggs or cereal - at dinner time. Take turns cooking with your spouse. Or, let someone else do the cooking and treat your family to a dinner night out from time to time to give yourself a break - like sushi, fish and chips, or visiting a family-friendly restaurant. This is a great time to bond and discuss your day together too.



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- * **Shop ahead of events:** Plan and shop for meals in advance, buy kids' birthday presents and new shoes and clothes before seasons change. Cull all unused footwear and clothing and make room for and know what new items you need to buy when the seasons change. This is especially important when you have small, but fast-growing children who are regularly changing shoe and clothing sizes (but don't have hand-me-downs at the ready). This way you won't need to drop everything and panic shop after work or at lunchtime because the weather has suddenly changed and you only have summer footwear and clothes that fit!
- * **What to do if you feel guilty about working:** Relentless work deadlines can mean working late nights or on weekends, or you might be required to travel for work and be away from your kids a lot. At times like this you might question your choices. Ask yourself why you feel guilty. Do whatever it takes to help yourself feel good about your work choices. This might mean saying 'no' to work and 'yes' to family time sometimes. Don't identify yourself as a parent only. Allow yourself to be yourself and to pursue your own personal goals and dreams. You're allowed to.

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