

# *A Baker's Dozen Tips for Balancing Work and Family*

## **1. Find a way to keep up with everyone's activities.**

- Have one place to record dates and commitments for all family members.
- Use initials of family members or some other way to keep up with activities.
- A wipe-off calendar on the refrigerator is one way.
- Keep a pen handy. Write phone numbers right on the calendar.
- Keep track of family commitments in your personal calendar.
- Remember to check the calendar every day!

## **2. Get the family organized and in a routine.**

Establish order in the way homework is completed, the grocery list is made, the shopping is done, and the house is cleaned.

### **Ideas:**

- Have baskets in each room to help with clean up.
- Put a box in each closet for outgrown clothes or those to be given away.
- Use separate laundry baskets for each family member.
- Color-code towels, washrags, cups and toothbrushes.
- Assign each family member a night for meal preparation.
- Get input from family members for meal, snack ideas.
- Prepare for morning the evening before.
- Put binder, backpack, brief case, etc. in a special place.
- Make lunches; lay out clothes.
- Get up 15 minutes earlier.
- Use incentives to get chores and homework completed race the timer.
- Clutter-proof your house!
- Clean out toys and clothes twice a year.
- Let children have their own garage sale and keep the profits.
- Process notes from school immediately and return them to the backpack.

## **3. Work as a team with your spouse and children to get household chores done.**

- Brainstorm a list of all that needs to be done (list even small things).
- Consider each person's preferences and capabilities.
- Use teaching, monitoring, and rewarding to get kids involved in helping.
- Negotiate the division of tasks and encourage creativity; keep a record of the agreement.
- Set a time to re-evaluate and re-negotiate.
- Give up being critical or territorial with your spouse, if a job isn't done to your standards, bite your tongue!

## **4. Organize your household so that it can function smoothly without you.**

Keep a supply of favorite convenience foods on hand so that meals can be prepared easily in your absence. Try to keep up with laundry and grocery shopping so that a day's delay in doing either won't leave the family without clean clothes or food.

**5. As children get older, give them more responsibility.**

Don't do for kids things they can do for themselves.

**6. Lower your standards for housekeeping.**

Love and attention are far more important to your family than home-cooked meals and spotless rooms.

**7. Set aside time each day to spend alone with your spouse and each child.**

Even ten minutes can make a difference. Bedtime can be a great time to read and cuddle with children.

**8. Create more time by managing your time more efficiently.**

Ideas:

- Grocery shop only once a week at "off hours."
- Use lunch hour for running errands.
- Double-up when cooking & freeze leftovers.
- Buy greeting cards & wrapping paper in bulk.
- Screen calls if possible.
- Talk on a portable phone allowing you to do more than one task at a time.
- Hire help with housework if possible.

**9. Let your family know ahead of time what to expect if you have to work late.**

Call your kids at home and your spouse at work to let them know as soon as possible rather than surprising them at the last minute. Leave notes for them.

**10. When you are at home, be there in body and spirit.**

Prioritize and delegate your work so that you don't have to take work home with you on a regular basis. Leave work problems at work and home problems at home as much as possible.

**11. Make sure your family knows that their needs take a high priority despite your busy schedule.**

Teach children how to reach you during the workday. Call home in the afternoon if possible. A note in the backpack, lunch kit, briefcase, or on the counter, a message on the answering machine, or an extra hug can say, "You're special. I love you."

**12. Eliminate guilt!**

Role model for your family that work is a necessary and important part of your life. Set priorities and live them out. Learn to be assertive. Set limits and say "NO" when you need to. Don't be critical of yourself about what you aren't doing. Find enjoyment in what you *are* doing, in who you are, and in where you are right now in life!

**13. Take care of yourself.**

Schedule time for TLC, whatever meaning that has for you. Each day do something you enjoy. Make time to get away. Vacations are vital!

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