

How Working Parents Can Have a Work-life Balance

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As long as they make a habit of organising their schedules and remain flexible...

Everything changed for Gemma Malone when she found she was pregnant. She had just accepted a position in a law firm as a legal assistant and was excited to take on the challenge of a new job. Gemma and her husband wanted a child but, now, the challenge of how to combine parenthood with the demands of work became a priority issue.

Up to the present, although both wanted a child, her focus had been firmly on her career. Now, there would be an important change to consider, and manage. There would be demands upon her that would inevitably conflict at times.

Balancing demands, at home and at work, is a challenge for most parents – even if they have support from family or paid help. It is a continuing balancing act to satisfy the demands and expectations that come from everywhere around you.

You arrive home after a day at the office in a good mood but tired. And with your tiredness comes irritability. You could do with some time to yourself but have to deal with the differing demands of the children and family.

Let's look at some strategies to help you along the way:

Get really organised

Now, you may think you are organised but the chances are that if you leave one task unmanaged then there will be a “knock-on” effect upon either you or the children. Prepare and use checklists to make sure everyone has everything they need for the next day – you



really don't want to have to deal with any surprises.

Uniforms, books, homework, gym kit, sports equipment, musical instruments and packed lunches should all be ready for the following morning, so that all you and the children have to do is pick up the bags, put them in the car and off you go. Invariably, there will be one child who is late who has to be dragged out of bed and down the stairs to the breakfast table. And that will not put you in a good mood to start your day.

School clothes should all be ready and laid out the night before, so you do not have children rummaging around looking for shirts, ties or skirts, as this will only put unnecessary pressure on you before you arrive at work.

Schedule

To manage school activities, make sure you know where each child is going to be for

every part of the day. Your iPhone can be very useful in helping you keep track of activities and appointments. Plan ahead and use the school calendar to make sure you add all extra-curricular activities to your schedule and that they do not conflict with already planned business meetings on the day when there is a school play or sports activity.

Backup plans

Someday, one of your children is going to get sick. And you have other children to take to school, but you still have to be at work to attend a meeting. All sounds frenetic and in many ways it is, but it is inevitable. With all the planning in the world, you cannot avoid children being sick.

You have to plan as to who will be available to help you in times of emergency. Your parents may not be around and you don't have any regular childcare. So you need a backup plan. What happens if... and it is up to you to fill in the space.

Being a working parent is not always easy but if you connect with other mothers and fathers who work and even join a support group, it is amazing how helpful it can be. It is very comforting to know there will be someone else to pick up your children if needs be. Of course, you will reciprocate whenever possible.

Being organised and networking with others in a similar position are the keys to ensuring you have a satisfying and rewarding career as a working parent.

about the author



Motivational Speaker, Carole Spiers has spent 20 years as CEO of a UK Stress Management Consultancy, working with equal success both in the UK and the Gulf. She is an acknowledged authority on corporate stress and a BBC guest-broadcaster. Carole is Author of a new book *Show Stress Who's Boss!* Book Carole for a motivational presentation at your next conference or in-house event. www.carolespiers.co.uk.

