

Tips for Working Parents – and other Random Thoughts

The needs of Kids change with age, so will the ebbs and flows of career priorities

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Organization

- One calendar on reffridge/central location; combining personal & professional calendars
- Magnetic bulletin board for invitations, permission slips etc.
- Notebook with plastic sleeves (command central)
 - Class/team rosters
 - Addresses
 - Local take out menus
 - Soccer/activity schedules
 - School/ SU Academic Calendar
- Beginning of school year write down all vacations, major work commitments and put on your work calendar so that you avoid double scheduling or last minute coverage needs
- Due dates- library books, college applications etc.
- Special box for library books so they don't end up lost on shelves
- Predetermined shopping list- keep in kitchen and circle what you need; put in order of the aisles of your favorite grocery store (Bluesuit.com)

Time Management

- Do whatever you can the night before
 - Pack lunches (kids can assist)
 - Pick out clothes (you and your kids)
 - Children sleep in clothes for next day
- *to do* vs. *to be* list
- **not to do** list
- Homework clubs
- Figure out bedtime- work backwards and then start at least 30 minutes ahead of schedule
- Present closet
- Gift Certificates (grocery stores, on-line)
- On-line shopping
- Let go!! – dirty house is Ok
- Separate clean laundry – one basket per person. If it doesn't get put away kids can still find their clothes; dirty/clean labels
- Buy only white socks – always match
- Say no:
 - Don't say, "I am too busy", say that my schedule doesn't allow for that but here is what I can do..."

Negotiating Partner Responsibilities

- You have to ask; dropping hints won't work and will only lead to further frustration; state what you are asking for and why
- Let partner know ahead of time important dates that are non-negotiable should a family crisis (sick kid) occur
- Treat partner like a friend, you would say, "thank you, I appreciate your help"
- The "shoulds" still need praise and thanks
- Text messaging
- Swap babysitting
- Careful of "tag team parenting" pitfalls

Food

- Let your kids help you cook- together time as well as getting the dinner started
- Crock Pots
- Pre-made dinners (healthy choices too)
- Dream Dinners, a national "meal-assembly" chain
- Freeze marinated meats/chicken/fish all ready to cook (defrost am)
- Pre-packaged vegetables with seasoning/butter and boil in sealed bag or microwave
- Consistent weekly menus: Monday is hamburger night, Taco Tuesday etc.
- Keep frozen baked goods for the last minute potluck; bread machine
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Newborns

- In the morning nurse and pump at the same time – create extra milk supply and eliminate an extra nursing/pumping session
- Wear a smock over your work clothes (XXL men's button shirt works well)
- Baby wipes in your office and car (they take out all kinds of stains)

Sick Kids

- Negotiate ahead of time – ask partner spouse etc. if possible to not schedule anything critical on your "big event"
- Try to find substitute teachers – they make great flexible daycare providers
- Have a back up plan
 - Worklife Office
 - Sick Child Care
 - Bay Area 2nd Mom
 - Town & Country Nannies
 - Under the Weather
- Adopt a local grandparent
- When you leave work, put out files or whatever someone might need to "pinch hit" in case you never make it to work
- Also take home something you can easily work on from home if necessary (technology great for this- flash stick, laptop)

Resentment/backlash and Work Issues

- Respond to those emails you are actually reading at 11:00pm
- Post your schedule so that folks know you work through lunch or come in at 7am
- Offer to help out a colleague when there is no crisis in your life- it will be easier to ask for help when **you** need it
- Don't ask as if it is an entitlement for parents- is careful talking about how difficult your life/morning is – this is your choice to have kids/work etc.
- Talk about other people's non-kid commitments as important too
- One strategy (better for younger kids) Work last or 2nd half of the day – too hard to leave early and you may be able to go in earlier. Mornings are a useful time for volunteering at school, exercise, Dr. appts etc.
- 1/2 time is harder to take time off – you are already less visible
- Visible projects/committee work
- Is there a good time to put career on hold?
 - Research shows better to establish yourself first – or become needed then negotiate for flex
- Offer to cut back for salary savings (80%, 50% in summer)
- Perhaps move to roles that do not require you be there to supervise etc.
- How do you look on paper?
- Keep kid friendly items in your office for emergency- make your work fun for them- a treat

School /Activities

- Guilt
- Find out what you can do ahead of time for the school parties etc. if you cannot be there on the day of to help
- Bake cookies to send to field trips if you cannot attend
- Actually offer to be the assistant team coach then you can pick the day of practice that best fits into your work schedule
- Offer to take kids friends on weekends or evenings so that you do not have to fill awkward to call if in a pinch
- Find a stay at home parent to contact when “you need to know”... it is worth developing these relationships early on so that they are established when you need them
- Don't just drop off kid to school – walk them to classroom to have contact with teacher and other parents
- If possible volunteer in classroom once a month or so
- Explain to teacher or Parent volunteer that your work is not flexible but you want to help so what project can be done from home

Other

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