



Wee Learn

Wee Builders
(3 – 4 years):
Ways to Balance Work
and Family



It's never easy being a parent trying to juggle a full-time job with a family life. Read on for tips on how you get closer to reaching an ideal work-life balance. Being a full-time working parent can lead to feelings of guilt and stress because of divided attention between work and family. The key is to focus on a plan, get organized, and find the right balance between profession and parenthood. Here are ways to help make sure both your career and your family flourish.

Let Go of the Guilt. Rather than dwell on how you're not with your child, think about how your role in the company is benefitting the family. Perhaps you can afford certain classes or educational opportunities for your children or you're able to put away savings for college. "The most successful working parents have found ways to be efficient in both worlds—and that requires being able to come to terms with choices and focus on the priorities that are in the moment," says Lisa Pierson Weinberger, a lawyer. Accept that there will be good and bad days. Know you are not alone in these feelings and should discuss your feelings with partners or support groups, which are a great way to reach out to others trying to find the same work-home balance.

Make the Mornings Easier. Avoid starting the day on a frazzled note by getting organized the night before. Pack the kids' lunches, lay out their clothes (plus your own), and have everyone shower. You should also decide what to make for breakfast, and repack the diaper bag, backpacks, purses, or workbags to be placed by the door, right next to your keys, so you can grab them and lock up on your way out. Look over the next day's to-do list and divide the schedule, determining which parent gets the kids dressed, buys necessary groceries, and cooks the meals. This is also a good time to discuss any changes to the family schedule. Knowing that a lot of the mundane tasks are completed will allow you to spend a few minutes eating breakfast with the kids without rushing out of the house.

Create and Organize a Family Calendar. Figure out your family's priorities. A calendar can include dates when bills are due, a chore chart for the kids, a list of school and family events, extracurricular activities, birthdays, and more. We suggest using Google calendars, which can be easily shared and synced on smartphones, because "they are colour-coded and get superimposed on each other, so you can always be on top of scheduling challenges."

Fran Durekas, Founder and Chief Development Officer for Children's Creative Learning Center, suggests "setting aside 15 minutes each Sunday to review and prepare for the upcoming week's schedule. This helps eliminate surprises during the week." Staying organized is also about having a clean environment. Have a "family command station" near an entranceway, where important papers and documents are placed, along with keys, chargers, batteries and petty cash. Carving out dedicated spots will save time and improve efficiency in your home.



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Stay Connected During the Day. Stay connected with your children even when you're not together. For moms with younger kids, consider recording yourself talking or singing on a video or record your voice reading along to a children's book (Hallmark has a series of recordable storybooks). If you're going to miss or be late to an older child's event, give her something special in the morning, like a good-luck charm or a personal note. Look into options for filming the event so you can watch it later and not miss a moment. During your breaks at work, call your child; hearing her can help you get through a rough day, and she'll be comforted to know you're near.

Create Special Family Activities. Making time for your kids is crucial, both during the week and on the weekends, to nurture your family dynamic and allow everyone to bond. If you're pressed for time, have a family breakfast or a family night with board games or movies. "Create activities that regularly fit into your schedule so everyone knows what to expect and what to look forward to." When you do have family outings, avoid talking about work or checking your phone. Instead, focus on your kids' interests such as friends, classes, and hobbies. With older children, ask for their activity suggestions and try to meet their needs. In the end, it doesn't really matter what you do as long as you do it together.

Spend Time with Your Partner. Remember to nurture your relationship with your partner, who will often be the number one person by your side. Start by having monthly date nights to get closer, feel rejuvenated, and enjoy each other's company. Often, if you're busy with work and home, your partner is the first to get neglected. Fostering this relationship will bring back some excitement to the marriage or partnership and help you to "check in" with each other. For some couples, going out on a monthly date can be difficult and expensive, but that doesn't mean you can't focus on each other. Have an indoor date night by cooking an elegant meal together or even sitting together with a glass of wine and talking (but not about work or the kids.)

Create Moments for Yourself. By managing time wisely, you can fit in valuable "me" time regularly. A refreshing break will help you recharge while taking care of personal needs. Because your time is divided between your home and your career, make sure to manage your energy well. You can't be an effective spouse or parent if you're cranky, so take time to care for yourself to feel relaxed and effective. Lose yourself in a book before you go to sleep, take a bubble bath once a week, or treat yourself to a spa day. Fit in time for exercise (like a yoga class) or focus on a hobby. Remember to eat well and get enough rest.

Adapted from: <http://bit.ly/2sAWB0F>



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