

Splitting Time: Work and Family

If you're new to working at home, you'll quickly find that it's not as easy as you thought it would be to manage the home, the kids, and the job. Many decide to leave the workforce, thinking that if they instead work at home, that they will have plenty of time to keep the house clean and organized while keeping the children under control.

The truth is, working at home takes much more motivation, perseverance and commitment than a job outside the home does. Balancing work and family can seem almost impossible at first, but it is easier than that. While it is hard work to earn money while raising your children, it is infinitely more rewarding than spending all day away from your family only to come home tired and unwilling to participate in family activities.

However, if you're struggling for ways to keep the balance and maintain your sanity, look to these helpful tips.

Make lists and prioritize

This holds true for both personal and professional "to dos." Some days you are so wrapped up in something you are working on, before you know it, it's almost dinner time and you've done none of your "personal" chores all day. I know it happens to me. Time to pick up from school and at best I can grab some takeaway or I know we won't be eating until very, very late. It helps to have some meals in the freezer – this saves money if you get tied up and is also better for you all.

Those who work at home will have no shortage of things around the house to keep up with.

Knowing exactly what you need to accomplish will help you prioritize your day, getting the most important things out of the way first. That way, if your day doesn't quite go as planned, it will be the least important things that don't get done.

Schedule your work and your play

When we have an outside job, our bosses determine our schedules. We're allowed breaks, lunches, and the occasional vacation day. When working at home, those who keep a schedule are able to stay on track and balance their work and home lives more efficiently.

If you find that you have the children and you need to work at the same time, try to integrate the two. This tends to only work for short bursts and certainly is not a good practice to use full time. Children need their "quality" one-on-one time. Also, if they get *real* one-on-one activities, they are more comfortable to entertain themselves a little while so you can get some work done.

Children can draw on your scrap paper. They can have a folder or two and you can make them "do some filing", with their drawings when they are finished. Whilst higher in cost, there are a number of fantastic education lap-top style toy computers now. When you're working on

your laptop, the children can be “working” on theirs. This kills two birds with one stone – they are occupied *and* learning to spell or count!! Be sure to have lots of activities, books, games, crayons / pencils and paper, things they can do without your full supervision. Have a few favourite movies on hand – I am definitely not a fan of using the television as a babysitter, but sometimes you have to do what you have to do. I know ‘Cars’ will get me a good chunk of work on my own every time.

Don't fall into the Trap of “All Work”

Working from home can set up up perfectly for “I’ll just pop in and get blablabla done”. Before you know it, an hour or two has passed. Every time someone turns around – there you are, back in the office. You need to have balance. Children need quality time with you, not 5 minutes here and there between your working. You need to have guidelines as to how much you time you will spend working. Be strict with yourself. Your family still needs you and if you fall into this trap I can guarantee that down the track, your family will resent you for it.

Set office hours if you have to. The family must respect your working hours and you must respect that they want their parent outside of working hours.

Conclusion

All in all, restraint and time management are the key here. There will need to be some flexibility on behalf of all parties, but if you set the guidelines and try to be very strict with them, your time between work and home should balance nicely and everyone should be happy with giving the space or attention required in the right doses.

If you found this helpful, or would like to learn about these topics in more depth, please visit my website www.workathomeandparent.com or feel free to contact me for more information. Take advantage of a free 20 minute consult.

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