

Balancing Family & Career

By Jessica Ludwig

Balancing family and career can be a daunting task and difficult equilibrium to establish. Here are some tips to help you make the best of both worlds.

Determine your family goals and career goals. Do you want to work full or part-time? Do you want to live in a rural or urban area? Once you have determined this, talk to your partner and discuss his/her goals as well and how your individual goals will work together. Remember, you are not a bad parent for wanting a career. The goals you set are right for you. No one can judge them and you cannot judge anyone else's.

Prioritize. Making sports games and squeezing in some family time on the weekends is something you will never regret doing, but may regret missing. Consider how many committees you need to sit on and what work can be done from home after kids are in bed.

It is crucial to have dependable support people such as co-workers and child care providers. This will help alleviate stress knowing that you have left tasks in competent hands.

Delegate when you can. This may mean dividing tasks among coworkers, asking your husband to cook supper or getting your kids to develop responsibility by making their own lunches.

Try to live in an area that accommodates all of your goals. Hassles of extra travel take time away from both work and family and will ultimately result in frustration.

Get up an hour or two earlier than usual. As horrifying as that sounds, it's worth it! While the house is quiet and peaceful you will be able to get a lot done and you will get to work feeling calm because you accomplished something already and didn't rush out of the house. Your kids will also reap the benefits of calmer mornings as this helps start their day of right.

Take care of yourself. This balance can cause high levels of stress. Take time for yourself. Ask your partner to watch the kids while you take an hour to unwind. Have a bath, watch your favourite TV show or have a nap. Your health is important. If you are sick, it throws the whole family off. Get enough sleep and take family vacations when you can, even if it's just a campout in the backyard. Escape.

One perk of working and having strong family ties is that you have two areas of support. When it's hard at home, work can be a nice escape. And when work becomes overwhelming, goofing around with your kids can bring a welcome smile to your face.

Remember – you are a role model to your children. Showing them that you are able to manage the family/career balance, allows them to grow up knowing they can do whatever they want. Also, when you are away, your children are able to establish independence and your partner is able to become a confident caregiver.

Have a sense of humour. This juggling act can be stressful but once you reframe a stressful situation, it is often quite funny. And remember – laughter really is the best medicine.

By Jessica Ludwig. Jessica is a child development worker at Family Services of Central Alberta. For information about parenting or parent and child groups available, call 343—6400 or go to www.fsca.ca