

Is it Possible for Parents to Live a Balanced Life?

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To be an effective parent, it's important to balance caring for your children, working, and caring for yourself. How can you do that, and is it really possible?

Factors that may contribute to being out of balance:

- You don't feel you have the right to attend to your needs because your parents didn't.
- You're not working full-time or you're a stay-at-home parent, so you feel you can't spend money on a baby sitter or you don't have extra money for things that aren't necessary.
- If you're working away from home, you feel guilty taking any time for yourself since you don't see your family as much as you would like.
- You feel pressure from others or from your inner taskmaster to do more or to be perfect.
- It's hard for you to set limits on your childrens' demands, especially if you're working and don't want them to be angry with you.
- You don't have enough support from family or friends. Perhaps you have trouble asking for help, or you don't have any relatives living near you.
- If you're a single parent, you don't feel you have time or energy for romance. If you have a partner or spouse, you may be out of practice being intimate.

Tips to balance the scales:

- Understand your temperament, and look more objectively at your needs.
 - If you're slow-to-adapt or sensitive type of person, take time to transition from work to family. Reflect on your day for a few minutes before you go inside your home.
 - If you're a high energy or intense type of person, chances are you need more time for exercise. If you can't go to a gym, figure out ways to incorporate activity into the time you spend with your kids. When you're tired at the end of the day, take a walk, or dance. It just may help you feel better.
- Observe the way things work at your house. How do you spend your time? What are the "time drains?" What's missing?
- Keep a journal to clarify your needs. Note your likes, dislikes, and priorities.
- Visualize how you would like things to be. Maybe you would like to see your spouse feeling relaxed and spending time with you, or doing more of the housework or cooking.
- Say "no" to spending time with people you don't enjoy, unless it's absolutely necessary.
- Have family meetings to express your feelings, establish goals, and to listen to and tend to the needs of your family.
- Take time for self-care, even if it's ten minutes a day. Turn the phone and computer off, take some deep breaths, and remember that for which you're grateful.

Reach out to other parents for support. Building community is a gift for you and for your children, and a way to find balance in your life.