



WORKING
MOMS
CALM THE CHAOS
With These Time Management
Techniques

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"A mother is she who can take the place of all others but whose place no one else can take."

–Cardinal Mermillod

Because you're a working mom, you know how tough it can be to get everything done and still have time for yourself and your relationship.

In addition to spending time with your children, your kid's extracurricular activities, meal planning and preparation, and keeping your home clean and organized, you've still got to be conscientious about your job. Plus, it's important to allow yourself time to get proper rest and sleep, too.

When you have so many roles to play, you've got to be on top of it at all times. But that seems impossible sometimes, doesn't it? ***This report will provide you with plenty of tips to help you have time for all these important things in your busy life.***

GETTING OUT OF THE HOUSE ON TIME IN THE MORNINGS

Perhaps one of the most hectic times of your work days is the morning, when you're getting ready for work while trying to get your family ready for their day as well. Having an efficient morning routine helps your entire family and starts the day out on a positive note.

Preparing for Work

The more organized you are as you dress for work, the more time you'll save to do other things – like getting your family out the door on time.

Consider these tips to streamline your routine:

1. **Wear easy-care clothing to work.** Buy work clothing that's made from wash and wear fabrics. Work clothes that can be tossed in the washer and dryer and then hung up right away will save you loads of time you would

have otherwise spent running to and from the dry cleaners or ironing every week.

2. **Have an area in your closet specifically for work clothes.** This way, you spend virtually no time looking through your closet wondering what on earth you'll wear to work that day. Whether it's the left side of your closet or the back corner, organize your work clothing to minimize time spent selecting your outfit for the day.
 - ➔ Hanging your work clothes by clothing type – such as all the slacks, then the skirts, blouses, tees, then blazers, and finally dresses – will show you at a glance exactly what you have to choose from.
 - ➔ If you then organize within each clothing category by color, the time you save getting dressed for work will be tremendous. Getting dressed in the morning will be quick and easy. ***You'll grab, dress and go in just minutes.***
3. **Organize your shoes.** Make it even easier on yourself by organizing your shoes. You'll no longer have to spend valuable moments running through the house in the morning, checking your watch while wondering where you left your navy heels!
 - ➔ There's a number of inexpensive ways to organize shoes. Visit your local discount store to see whether you want shoe racks, or a large shoe "garage." Once you decide on the method, arrange them by color or work versus casual shoes.
4. **Designate a space to store work-related items.** Whether it's your briefcase, a folder you brought home for review, your laptop, or job-related tools, have a specific place where you'll deposit those items when you arrive

home. You'll always know where they are when you need them.

- ➔ Plus, as you leave the house in the morning, ***you know just where to go to grab your stuff.*** If you've got a desk area, great. Maybe you've got a bench by the door where you can place your briefcase. Having a designated area means you'll never have to spend time looking everywhere for that folder you brought home. Now that's a time saver!

Buying easy-care work clothing, preparing your closet to quickly access your clothing and shoes, and having a space at home to keep your work supplies will help you streamline your getting-ready-for-work routine. ***You'll enjoy calmer mornings*** and more time to deal with kids and home tasks when you take these steps to be more efficient and organized.

Helping Your Family Prepare for Their Day

Now that you have a time-saving routine for getting ready for work, let's look at some tips to help your family get ready and out the door with less chaos.

These suggestions will help your family establish an efficient morning routine:

1. **Make lunches the night before.** Label each bag with the name of whoever's lunch it is. In the morning, it will be a cinch for everyone to just grab their lunch out of the fridge on their way out the door.
2. **Have your kids pick out their clothes ahead of time.** Especially if you have teenagers, planning out their wardrobe the night before (or even on the weekend for the next week) saves a lot of valuable time in the mornings. For the younger ones, laying out their clothes the night before helps them get dressed in record time.

3. **Sign papers and put backpacks by the door.** Make it part of your child's homework to give you all the papers that need to be signed and pack everything up that they'll need for the next day. Then, put their backpack in a designated spot near the door for an easy morning getaway.
4. **Enjoy your breakfast together. *Wake up to coffee and breakfast already made.*** Set your coffeemaker and put the ingredients for hot cereal, like oatmeal or malt-o-meal, in your Crockpot and turn it on before you go to bed. Add some fresh fruit and juice and you have a delicious, ready-made breakfast to enjoy with your family before you leave for your day.
5. **Add 15 minutes to your morning.** Setting the bedside alarms for 15 minutes earlier can give you and your family that little bit of extra time you may need to bring peace to your mornings.
 - ➔ ***A psychological trick is to set these clocks 10 or 15 minutes ahead of real time.*** Even though you know they're set differently, it often helps to get you moving a little earlier.

These tips will help you and your family start out the day in a happy, positive frame of mind. It's amazing what a difference an organized routine in the morning can make for your whole day. ***Crises are averted and everyone can get where they need to be on time without feeling rushed.***

Adapting these tips into your routine may take some doing at first, but once you and your family turn them into habits, you'll wonder why you didn't start sooner! ***It only takes 21 days in a row to form a habit*** – start now and, by this time next month, crazy, chaotic mornings will be a thing of the past.

“I go work as hard as I can then I go home and live my life.”

–***Kate Hudson***

MANAGING TIME WITH YOUR CHILDREN

It's mind-boggling how easy it is to sometimes lose sight of your priorities in life due to the pressures of time. Learning to more efficiently manage your time means you'll be able to carve out time for the most important stuff, like your kids.

Use these strategies to manage time with your children:

1. **Establish time for your child every single day.** It may sound tough, but once you figure out when you'll do it, you'll feel great about your day. Even if it's the 15 minutes in the morning you drive your teen to school, make it quality time when you really listen and communicate well.
 - ➔ Consider the times during the day when you and your children are at home together. Maybe it's that 30 minutes in the kitchen once you get dinner in the oven. You can both have a cold beverage and share your days. Set aside these times for your kids. Spending special moments with your kids each day is the result of effective time management.
2. **Bring stability to your schedules by insisting everyone be present for dinner.** Not only does it help your time management, but also some of the most cherished memories of your kids' childhood are made right there with the quality time you spend together at the dinner table.
 - ➔ You all have to eat anyway, why not dine together? Use dinner time to listen to what your kids have to say about school, their friends, their music, and anything else they're interested in. ***Dinner time is a gold mine in terms of spending time with your kids.***

3. **Set limits and briefly explain.** When you feel your kids are encroaching on your “getting ready for work time” in the mornings, have a brief, frank discussion with them. Say something like, “I see that you want me to help you choose your outfit, Susie, but I’ve got to get ready for work. How about I come in to help you in 10 minutes?”
 - ➔ If Susie often interrupts you in the mornings, think about helping her select her outfit the evening before so the morning goes more smoothly. Once you set limits to help her in the evenings and not allow her to consistently interrupt your own routine, ***she’ll learn to develop a routine also.*** You’ll both save time.

4. **Distinguish between attention-seeking and needing help.** Learn to determine when kids are seeking attention versus actually requiring your assistance. If the behavior is repetitious, it’s a clue the child is attention-seeking and you’ll want to set some limits.
 - ➔ If your child is displaying annoying, disruptive behaviors particularly in the mornings, evaluate whether you’re spending some quality time each day with the child. If you are, most likely they won’t feel the need to engage in disruptive, attention-seeking behaviors.
 - ➔ In the long run, spending quality time daily with your kids will save you time in your busy, chaotic day and help to quell kids’ attention-seeking behaviors.

5. **Take turns with your spouse.** Take turns getting the kids ready in the mornings and prepped for bed at night. ***Sharing these chores is a great method for each parent to discover more time with their kids in their busy days.***

6. **Be honest with your kids about time.** When you need to get something done, tell your kids. “I have to work for about an hour on a report. Then we’ll take a bike ride.” Estimate a time you’ll be done so they know you’re planning to spend time with them.

You’ll want to learn to tell the difference between kids actually needing your help versus seeking your attention. Take turns and honestly tell your kids if you need time to complete a task. When you do all these things, you’ll have happy kids, a calmer, more balanced life, and time to spare.

“My normal day is, I get up with the kids, take them to school, a few days a week I might do Pilates, reading, meetings, and then we always do family dinner at 6:30.”

–Demi Moore

MAKING TIME TO TAKE PART IN YOUR KIDS’ EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

An important aspect of your child’s childhood is taking part in extracurricular activities.

Whether your child wants to be in chess club, play softball or be on the soccer team, when you show up at his events you strengthen his self-esteem and continued activity involvement. ***Your child will feel emotionally supported and loved when you attend these events.***

How can you manage your time to be there for extracurricular activities?

1. **Always have a Plan B.** Maybe you planned to review a report at home this evening. But when you got home, you found out your daughter has a

soccer game. What will you do?

→ One option is to take the file with you to the soccer game. During time-outs or times your daughter isn't in the game, look over your report.

2. **Think about how to utilize time normally spent waiting at your kids' events.** If you make it a point to carry your folder or your smartphone with files, the time you spend waiting for your kid's part in the event can be smartly spent getting other tasks accomplished.

→ Rather than experiencing moments of sitting and waiting, read a page of a report or check subtractions in your checkbook.

3. **If necessary, alternate extracurricular activity attendance with your spouse.** Work it out with your spouse to ensure at least one of you shows up at your kids' activities. This way, a parent is always there to support your child and both parents will know how the child is doing in the sport/activity. You can all talk together about the activity at dinner time.

When you have a Plan B, utilize down time while at your children's extracurricular activities, and trade off attending children's activities with your spouse, you'll find you can balance attending your children's activities with the rest of your life.

"Family is the most important thing.
Your career has to come second."

–Jennifer Lopez

MANAGING MEAL PLANNING

One of the most repetitive aspects of your life is meal planning. It just gets old, always trying to figure out what's for dinner. However, there are some things you can do to save time when it comes to meal planning and preparation.

What if you had a “go-to list” of meals with main ingredients listed for each one? Although setting up your initial list will take a bit of time, you'll have dinner figured out from here on out and your meal planning will be streamlined. Practice the following strategies to save minutes and worry regarding planning healthful meals for your family.

Developing a Meal List

Having a Meal List means you'll never have to spend time thinking too long about what's for dinner. Plus, your Meal List will include the main grocery items you need to prepare the meal.

It's best to have about 10 meals on your Meal List. On the weekends when you have more time, you can prepare more elaborate meals, if you wish. Your Meal List will include complete dinners on the left side with the store list to make those dinners on the right side of the paper so you'll quickly know the main ingredients to get at the grocery store.

Keep staples for the meals in your cabinet since you know you'll be preparing them periodically.

Sample Meal List

Here's a sample Meal List with 5 meals to inspire you:

Meals	Grocery Items Needed
Turkey or Chicken Hot Dogs Macaroni and Cheese Peas Baby Carrots or Celery Sticks Instant Pudding	Hot dogs Mac and Cheese Boxed Mix Frozen Peas Fresh carrots/celery Instant pudding mix
Cheeseburgers Broccoli Cole Slaw Fresh fruit—oranges, strawberries or bananas	Lean hamburger, cheese, buns Broccoli Cole slaw mix, salad dressing Fresh fruit
Baked Chicken Breasts Mashed Potatoes Green Beans Wheat Rolls Jell-O	Chicken breast, can of chicken soup Potatoes, butter, milk Fresh/frozen green beans Fresh/frozen rolls Jell-O mix
Chili Crackers Lettuce Salad Frozen Yogurt	Beans, hamburger, tomatoes, onion Crackers Lettuce, cheese, salad dressing Frozen Yogurt
Spaghetti & Meatballs Garden Salad Ice Cream Bars	Spaghetti, sauce, hamburger Loaf Italian bread, fresh garlic Lettuce and vegetables of your liking Ice Cream Bars

How to Put Your Meal List to Proper Use

To best put your Meal List to proper use, practice these strategies:

1. **Place copies of your Meal List everywhere.** Once you develop your Meal List, place a copy in your car, briefcase, kitchen, and purse or wallet.
2. **Share the Meal List with your spouse.** Give copies of your list to your spouse. If he makes a grocery store run or takes a turn preparing meals, he can refer to the list.
3. **Make your Meal List durable.** You might want to laminate the Meal List copy you put in your car. If you prefer, drop copies of your Meal List into those plastic sleeves to protect them.
4. **Store your Meal List on your computer/smartphone.** If you store your list on your computer and smartphone, you'll be able to quickly access it to select which meal to prepare.
5. **Consult your Meal List when grocery-shopping.** During your weekly shopping, buy enough food for the meals you plan to eat at home that week.

For best results, vary your meal list from time to time or put plenty of quick-fix meals on it to choose from, so you don't have to repeat each meal too often.

With meal lists, you'll never have to obsess about what's for dinner again and you'll save time and energy. Just glance at your Meal List and choose a meal you know your family enjoys that you can easily prepare. A Meal List is the ultimate time-saver!

“I don’t think you ever feel you’re balancing anything.
My kids are great, and I have a good husband.
You’ve just got to keep everything in the air.”

–*Brooke Shields*

Time-Saving Meal Preparation

Now that you know what you’ll be cooking, all you have to do is ensure you’ve got all the ingredients to prepare the meal and put the meal together.

1. **Double duty.** Use time spent preparing meals to connect with your spouse. If both of you prepare dinner, you’ll save time, plus you’ll get to spend some time together. You cook the spaghetti and sauce while your partner sets the table and makes the salad.
2. **Triple duty.** If your kids are old enough to join you in preparing the meals, make it a trifecta! You’ll spend some great quality time preparing the meals as well as dining together. You can make the salad while your spouse makes the chili. The kids can set the table and get out the crackers and salad dressing.
3. **Plan ahead.** While you’re making this evening’s dinner, make up the Jell-O for tomorrow night and stick it in the refrigerator. You can even make enough salad today for two meals: today’s dinner and tomorrow’s dinner. You’ll save on time tomorrow by putting in just a couple of minutes’ efforts today.

4. **Make twice the amount you need; freeze the rest.** Using your freezer is a wonderful time-saver. Cook enough spaghetti, chili, or chicken casserole for two meals and freeze the second meal. Down the road, all you'll have to do is defrost and heat the food to have a great, quick home-cooked meal. ***You'll be more relaxed and have more time to spend as you like.***

Meal preparation doesn't have to take hours every day. Apply some of the above strategies to accomplish other goals while cooking. Whether it's spending time with your spouse, visiting with your kids, planning ahead, or preparing food for two meals at once, quelling the chaos by using these strategies will ultimately help you save a lot of time and help you achieve balance.

"I was brought up to believe I could do anything I wanted professionally and, of course, be a mother at the same time. But I'm finding out that it's complicated. It requires a lot of thought and planning and I haven't figured it out yet."

–Maggie Gyllenhaal

HOUSEKEEPING

Nothing throws a wrench in your time management like keeping your home clean and in good order. However, having a workable plan for organizing your housekeeping chores will help tremendously.

Try these strategies to save time on keeping your home clean:

1. **Daily cleaning and organizing.** For 15 or 20 minutes each day, either in the mornings before work or when you get home, grab a dust cloth and

dust a room or two.

→ **Set a timer for 15 minutes** and pick up items and put them away until the timer sounds. Straighten magazines and fluff pillows.

2. **Have a basket or box handy.** Collect items in the living room that don't belong there: put them in your basket and deliver them to their proper place.

→ If your kids are age 5 or older, get them each a basket or box. Have them walk through the family room, living room, and den to pick up all their own objects and take them to their rooms. Teaching your kids to pick up after themselves on a daily basis will save you loads of hours over the years.

→ Plus, if you use the timer method mentioned above, the kids will love racing against the clock to get everything picked up and put away.

→ **Better yet, help them get into the habit of putting things away as soon as they're done with them.** For example, when they're done playing a game, they put it away. When they're through creating a work of art, they put the supplies back up where they got them from.

→ Do a quick walk-through of your rooms daily to keep things dusted and in their proper places. Ultimately, you'll save time by maintaining consistent order in your home because clutter will never get out of control.

3. **Schedule larger house-cleaning tasks out over time.** If you can't spare the 4 hours at once it takes to clean the house, why not divide up those tasks and do them over 3 or 4 days?

- ➔ For example, Monday, dust the living and dining rooms. Tuesday, sweep and mop the floors. Wednesday, vacuum and clean the bathrooms. Thursday, wipe down the kitchen appliances and polish cabinet doors. Saturday, do the laundry.
- ➔ Keep in mind that teaching your kids from young ages how to do basic cleaning tasks is beneficial to them and to you. Plus, some kids actually love doing “grown-up” tasks and will enjoy, at least for a while, helping Mom and Dad do housework.
- ➔ When you maintain organization in your home and keep up with your housework, you save time all the way around. ***Spending just 30 minutes a day 5 days a week will prevent your home from getting cluttered, disorganized and dusty.***

If you do a few quick house tasks daily, keep a box or basket handy to pick up errant belongings, teach kids to help pick up, and split up house-cleaning tasks over a few days, you'll keep up with all the home-related tasks that must be done. Extra time is golden and you'll have it when you put these methods to work.

“You learn to be less selfish and less worried about your career. I've always been very disciplined and focused on work, and having a baby makes you become less self-involved.”

–Jessica Alba

MAKING TIME FOR YOUR PARTNER

Working outside the home means time together is at a premium. Take time every single work day to email, phone or text your partner. ***Do something daily to keep your relationship special.***

In the event you share your home with your spouse, work to creatively fit in lots of time together. Working in tandem on house projects or lawn tasks can actually be fun and combines working at home and having “couples” time.

As you both share home responsibilities and step up to offer ways to get tasks accomplished together, you’ll preserve your relationship while saving time. When the kids are young, you’ll capture quite a bit of time alone together after the kids go to bed at 8 p.m. or so.

However, once in a while, the two of you should get away together, just for a couple of hours for dinner and a movie or a walk along the beach. When you plan the time in your busy calendar, it’s more likely to happen. A date night every other week or so will keep you close and help you feel okay about all the other things you do in your life.

“My husband and I are very fortunate, because we have flexible jobs. If you talk to parents, that’s what they’re trying to do have as much flexibility as possible.”

–Julianne Moore

CAPTURING “ME” TIME

Your calendar is crammed. You're still not quite getting everything done, but you're starting to feel better about how you're juggling work, home, kids, and spouse. But where will you find the time for doing things you love to do, just for you?

1. **Arise 30 minutes earlier.** One way to create more time is to get up earlier. The house is quiet, the phones aren't ringing and nobody else is around to interrupt you. If you had 30 minutes 3 or 4 times a week just for yourself, how would that make you feel?
 - ➔ Have a cup of tea and read your novel. Do yoga. Take a walk. Work on a scrapbook or a crochet project. Whatever you want to do, do it before everyone wakes up. You'll giggle with sheer joy when you do what you love and feel like the best time manager ever!
2. **Leave home earlier.** Leave for work 45 minutes earlier a couple of times a week for a quick work-out at the gym. If you can find me-time on your way to work, why not go for it?
3. **Meet friends for hors d'oeuvres after work.** Every two weeks, spend an hour after work having a beverage and snacks with your friends. You'll discover that building in just a bit of me-time will relieve stress, make you feel happier, and help you face your busy days.

Securing me-time as a working mom *can* be done. Try getting up earlier, leaving the house earlier to go to the gym, and occasionally meeting friends for drinks and a chat. Fit in the things you want to feel more satisfied and balance your busy life.

“Like all working mothers, sometimes I feel like a terrible mother and sometimes I feel like a terrible employee. But for the most part, I try to give myself a break, which is something I urge all mothers to do – to live your life with a cloud of guilt about everything you are doing is just not good for anybody.”

–*Katie Couric*

MORE TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

Because you work away from home, there will be times when you're in one place and thinking about jobs you need to complete in the other place.

Consider these suggestions to handle this issue:

1. **Carry a spiral notebook.** One thing that makes you feel like your life is chaotic is trying to hold everything in your head. What you must get done at home tonight or what you need to complete at work tomorrow just keeps playing over and over in your mind. But what if you could simply write down the item to do it tomorrow or this evening?
 - ➔ On the first page of your spiral notebook, start your Home to Do List. Every home task or child issue that pops into your head when you're at work can be quickly jotted down for further reference. ***You don't have to spend any more time thinking about it.*** It will be noted in your notebook.
 - ➔ Use the back pages for your Work to Do List. When you're at home and remember something you forgot to do at work today, write it down

instead of worrying about it.

2. **Don't sweat the small stuff.** Let go emotionally of details of life if they're insignificant. It's okay if your daughter couldn't find her pink blouse this morning. She'll probably find it this evening.
3. **Be flexible.** Plans change at the last minute. If you're willing to change your schedule at the drop of a hat, you might be able to save some time. Be willing to consider all the angles.
4. **Know your priorities.** Spend most of your time dealing with people and tasks that matter the most to you. You'll save time and feel more fulfilled as a result.
5. **Reflect on tomorrow's tasks.** In the evening when you're watching television, pull out your notebook and think about what you want to get done tomorrow at work and at home. It won't take longer than 10 or 15 minutes. Jot down what needs to get done so you can hit the ground running tomorrow. But for now, it's time to rest and reflect.
6. **Each morning, consider what you have to do.** Think, "How can I balance my schedule today? How will I include some work, some time with kids and family and a bit of time for me?" ***Instead of hitting the ground running, first take just a few moments to plan.***

Taming your busy and chaotic life might not be easy but can be achieved by carrying a spiral notebook to use as your to do list. Learning to let go of details that don't matter, being flexible, knowing your priorities, and taking time to reflect on tomorrow's tasks will all help you save time and bring you some peace. Then, in the morning, plan what you want to accomplish.

“I want to get it right - balance [motherhood] with my career.”

–*Christina Aguilera*

UNWIND, REST AND SLEEP

As your day draws to a close, realize all the tasks you accomplished.

Compliment your efforts. Hopefully, you’ve now got a bit of time to read or have some real conversation with your spouse.

Enjoy this time of day to unwind, fit in some me-time or share with your spouse. You’ll wake up tomorrow feeling ready to tackle another day of your busy life.

“Whatever you’re doing, do it 100 percent. If you’re with the kids, don’t think about work, and if you’re at work, don’t think about home. But the most important thing is to put family first.”

–*Ann Curry*

SUMMARY

Balancing work, children, children’s activities, home tasks, your primary relationship, and time for yourself is within your reach and integral to having a happy life. When you apply the suggestions and strategies in this report, you’ll achieve a pleasing balance through developing excellent time management skills.