



T I M E

BALANCING WORK & CHILDREN

If you are a mommy, you know that there is nothing more important to you than your children. They take time and effort to raise and oftentimes it feels like there is nothing left at the end of the day for ourselves. But perhaps one of the best things you can do for your kids is to have a healthy balance of serving them with refreshing yourself. While I realize there are phases in child-rearing that require more of your focused time and effort {i.e. newborn babies, potty-training toddlers} and I don't recommend abandoning your role as 'mom' and ignoring your kids for hours on end, I've found these tactics to be helpful in creating that difficult balance in our household.

HOW TO GET WORK DONE {while still taking care of your family}

1. **Have a flexible, but routine schedule.** A household will function much smoother when everyone knows what is coming next.
2. **Have high expectations.**
3. **Keep engaging toys and games available.** Blocks, legos, dolls, puzzles, board games—things that require some imagination are good.
4. **Make crafts accessible.** Colored pencils, crayons, rulers, scissors, glue sticks and paper are permanent fixtures on our kitchen table. Having these things available encourages kids to use their own creativity—and keeps them occupied for hours.
5. **Keep books close by.** Not only does it encourage a love of reading, but it is a good quiet activity when you need a few moments of peace.
6. **Be where your children are.** If you have a laptop, travel to the room where your children want to play. Just having your nearby will make them much more able to entertain themselves.
7. **Turn off the tv.** It is such a tempting 'babysitter', but there are so many other educational and creative things for your children to spend their time on. But don't get me wrong, it can come in handy in a pinch {and in moderation}.



HOW TO GET WORK DONE
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continued

8. **Use the outdoors.** If you have a yard, let them run, jump, swing, play. If not, take them to a park. Encouraging your kids to burn off some steam will do wonders for #9.
9. **Enforce a daily quiet time/naptime.** Even when your children have outgrown needing to nap, still incorporate a quiet time each day. It allows them to rest and you to have some time to yourself.
10. **Everyone should do their part.** Rather than going through your day cleaning up after your kids, train them to clean up after themselves. Simple jobs like picking up toys, putting dishes in the dishwasher, putting clothes in the dirty laundry basket, making beds all take up your time and they are simple tasks that children can handle.
11. **Free time.** If you have several children, sometimes they need a break from each other. Allow each child to select a toy, then put them in separate rooms for 'free play'. They can do what they want without disruption and it encourages creative play.
12. **Create a meal plan.** Dinnertime is much smoother when you aren't scrambling to throw something together. By writing out your months worth of dinners, you won't have to stop at 4:00 to realize you have no idea what to make. It is also helpful to have the ingredients for 2-3 easy meals available for quick dinners.
13. **RELAX.** The more laid back you can be when things don't go as planned, the more enjoyable your home life will be. Work hard, stay on task, love your kids and give yourself *plenty* of grace.