



Practical tips for working Parents on how to Make Time

It is hard to be a parent. It is really hard to be a parent who also works outside of the home. It is even harder to try to strike a balance of how to maximize quality time with your child when you don't have quantity time! No-one is disputing any of this BUT, time with your child can not be yet another thing that you have to tick off your list. It needs to be an act of love.

Parents are usually exhausted after a day at work and come evening time just want to fall down on the couch and relax...But this isn't a reality for parents, unfortunately. You have to cook dinner and it needs to be healthy (most of the time) You have to check on their homework, be interested in what they did at school and tell that bedtime story. The value of what this means to your child and how your love and attention makes them grow and blossom is evident & undisputed.

As a parent your time will either be spent on basic needs:

- Feeding
- Bathing
- Sleeping
- Clothing

or on the over-and-above kind of needs:

- Having a chat
- Asking how that problem he was having at school is working out
- Playing a game before bedtime
- Bedtime Story
- Riding bikes together on a Sunday afternoon

Every child needs both sets of needs to be met and responded to, yes they will survive on the basic needs being met but they will grow, develop and flourish into healthy adults when their 'over-and-above' needs are met! It's about you being tuned in and putting everything else aside to spend time with your child, not just about you fulfilling a basic need. Sometimes you will need to prioritise to make this work...leave the dishes in the sink and attend to the bedtime story.

An article in the Irish Examiner <http://bit.ly/nzcX9f> reported that out of 300 parents interviewed 60% said that increase work pressure has meant they are "too busy to read their child a bedtime story". This is very worrying as children really need this time with their parents and reading a bedtime story has been linked to improved literacy, creativity and better sleep in children.



 **Joanna Fortune**

For further information about this or other child development/behavioural challenges contact
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So, how can you “Make time” as a parent who works out of home??

Work out a personal schedule and break all the little ‘tasks’ up - it might not feel so overwhelming.

- Plan your week ahead: Tuesday/ Thursday is story night, Friday is make-your-own-desert night, short hike on Sunday afternoon. In this way time won’t fly away with all your good intentions.
- Plan the week’s menu ahead of time and go for healthy but quick meals during the week days. All this planning might take up one whole evening but the rest of your week will flow pleasantly because of this and hopefully leave you with extra time
- Chat over bath time and catch up on their day (age depending, of course)
- Make a point of having dinner or breakfast together and don’t be in a rush. Talk about your day and ask about theirs
- Take an extra ten minutes to read the bedtime story and kiss them good night
- Use your weekends to make up for lost time. Try to spend time with each child individually, even if it means taking her with you to the shop (give your child a mini-list of items they are responsible for getting or give them the list and they can tick off items as you buy them) or the car wash.
- Try to balance your weekends with chores and activities you can do with your children.
- Opt for an outing like a picnic/walk or baking (if raining) rather than a movie. This will create an opportunity for them to talk and you to listen.

It is hard to balance quality and quantity time with your child when you are working outside of home –PLANNING is essential! Be aware of the variety of influences your child is exposed to in terms of messages communicated <http://bit.ly/oPLgGE> (this video highlights this fact in a very effective way and while it focuses on girls, the message is relevant to influences boys are exposed to as well) and make sure your advice and influence is what they default to when they need guidance...the messages in a carefully chosen bedtime story allow you to convey these influences to your child at a time of their day when they are unwinding and totally engaged with you!



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