

The guilt factor- how working moms cope

Do you feel you have to split yourself between your family-life and work? Life seems to be getting faster and the chores and challenges never seem to end. We only have 24 hours in a day and they seem to fly by at light speed! Added to this, moms are always on duty and have to be available at all hours for their children. Between careers, chores and still having to put on a smile for their husband when he gets home, many feel over-stretched, overwhelmed, exhausted and as though there isn't enough time to spend with their children. This often leads to guilt feelings and emotional drain.

In addition, many moms think they need to be supermoms by juggling a career and spending a lot of time with their little ones. Often this is not possible and unrealistic and will leave you feeling guiltier for not achieving that goal. So, let's look at what children need and how much time you should spend with them to achieve an optimal balance.



*Research with children of all ages shows that they remember and value the **quality** of their experiences with their parents, much more so than the duration or **quantity**!*

So, you needn't spend hours on end every day to have a happy child. Balance is the key- plan each day, in order to spend sufficient time on yourself, your children, your family, your chores, your work and sleep.

The younger the child, the more time must be spent as there are more primary needs that have to be fulfilled, such as feeding, dressing, cuddling and bathing. As children grow older they discover their surroundings and other people. They don't need to be protected as much, but start to discover themselves and learn through play. As a parent you are the most important role model in your child's life. The happier you are, the happier your child will be. Spending quality time is more important than spending long hours with your child. 30-60 minutes per day is sufficient if you are able to switch off other disturbances and devote yourself completely to your child. Try not to think of work or other stressors, ask your children what they want to play and have a great time with them. Children lose interest in a certain activities quickly which means there is no need to spend hours playing!

Many parents try to ease their conscience by buying anything their child asks for. If your child had three wishes, what he would wish for? You will be surprised that 90% of children will say that they want to spend time with their parents. Activities don't have to cost money or require lots of planning. If there is more than one child in the family, make sure that you spend quality time alone with each child and not only as a family.

Anthony Witham, author of several family management and parenting books, once said "children spell love...T-I-M-E."

Practical ways to spend quality time with your kids

Retail Therapy!

Invite your kids and let them push the trolley for you, or give them simple items to get as you go down the aisle. Responsibility makes them feel trusted and important and as though they are contributing. If you can, walk to the shops, to give yourselves a little more time together.

Family cooking classes!

If you're still expected to cook after a hectic day at work, try working in ways for your kids to help. Depending on their age, ask them to help out in different ways such as handing you ingredients; if they can safely handle some of the utensils get them to help stir, wash vegetables or add spices. Take time to explain to them why it's necessary to perform the various steps. You'll show them that what they're doing is important to you and they'll be more inclined to help in the future.

Break time

Make a point of setting time that is solely for you and your children. Set an hour aside to play with your children. This will leave them feel special and you will be able to carry on working without a guilty conscience.

Activities that promote bonding

One on one

Spending time alone with your children is so important. It shows them that your relationship is special and that they can trust you and talk to you. Take a walk with them, go to a movie together or join them in an activity that is important to them. If you have more than one child, and time is not optimal, set weekend "dates" that they can look forward to. You can alternate a set amount of time each Saturday to spend with just one child for example, with the other understanding that next weekend is their turn.

Play their games

Exercise is important for your child and you. Try to incorporate physical activities into your play time. You can take them swimming, walking, play ball or dance. This will increase the serotonin levels, make everyone feel happier and help you to bond.

Quality time doesn't have to cost anything, be extremely time consuming or need to happen every day. Quality time is the time you have with your child where you bond, feel happy and enjoy each other's company. That is often enough to build a great parent-child relationship!

