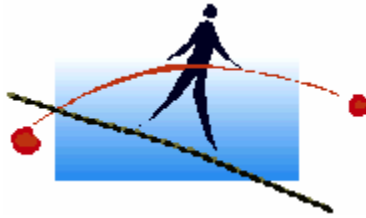


## BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

### 10 TIPS ON WALKING THE PARENTING TIGHTROPE



1. Communication is key to easing the day to day stress of balancing work and family. Keep a family diary or start a family bulletin board, where all family members can note issues and events as they arise. Other ways to encourage communication include having a regular family meeting time or keeping a monthly calendar for listing all upcoming events. This visual aid assists in identifying scheduling conflicts before they occur. Use your family meeting to work out solutions and compromises to these conflicts.

2. When you are rushing to complete a task, conduct the "worst case scenario" test by asking yourself, "What is the worst thing that will happen if this doesn't get done right away?" If you can live with the consequence, use that time to play a game with your child or to do something fun for yourself!

3. Ask yourself if you can redefine how a certain task or activity gets done. For example, can the cookies for the school bake sale be store bought rather than homemade?

4. Try to avoid setting yourself up for disappointment. The guilty "good parent" voice may be pressing you to get up early to make pancakes for breakfast, only to learn that your spouse has to rush off early and your three year old all of a sudden hates pancakes!

5. Ask yourself why you are doing a particular task. Is it essential? Is it a matter of safety? Is it something your child or spouse asked for your help with, **or is it something you have always done** - whether needed or not - something that your mother always did when you were a child?

6. Hold clean-up blitzes once or twice a week where the entire family spends fifteen minutes together tidying up the house and putting things away in their proper places.

7. Give your children specific tasks for which they are responsible, even your preschoolers. Use weekend time to teach them what you expect when they do the task so that your busy weekday mornings and evenings are not spent on this instruction. Having them do tasks as making their beds, clearing the table, learning to dress themselves (including tying shoes), taking care of the pets, etc. will free some of your time.

8. Ask yourself if you consistently assume the role of "answer person" in your household. If this is the case, try to change this pattern by having family members ask for help from your spouse or from an older sibling.

9. Evaluate how the television is used in your home. Can your children begin their homework rather than sitting in front of the TV? How about while you are fixing dinner? This may allow for more time after dinner for family conversation. Sometimes families limit TV strictly to weekends to increase the opportunity for communication during the weekdays.

10. Try to take care of **yourself** once in a while. See if your spouse or a family member can take the children for a Saturday afternoon, and give you a quiet afternoon to yourself. It is important for yourself and for your family that you to take time to "refuel."

