

## In Search of Balance

Did you make a resolution last month to create balance in your life, to strike some kind of equilibrium in your busy days? This can be a challenging goal. Here are a few ideas to keep you moving in the right direction.

**1) Define balance.** I define it as evenness. Dividing the pie fairly between family, work, chores, and play and squeezing in a little time for myself as well. Finding an equilibrium between time spent working and time spent with family and not spending too much time on just one aspect of life.

Once I defined it, I realized that I didn't want to spend long hours working at the expense of losing family time. So as a family we built in certain non-negotiables. We have dinner together so that we can talk about our days and catch up with each other. We go for walks in the winter or bike rides in the summer. We try not to over-schedule our time on weekends.

**2) Put a few systems in place.** Life runs much more simply once these systems are set up.

- Create a place for *everything* you own. *And* use it.
- Set up a Command Central in your kitchen or entry. This is one place where all of the family's information should be gathered and stored. Sports schedules, lunch menus, work schedules, phone lists should all be kept together in one place. This can be assembled in a three-ring binder, a file box, or wall pockets and a bulletin board. The style you choose is optional. *The need for a system is not.*
- Design a Launch or Landing Pad and a Go-Box. Create a place near the entrance of your home. It is important that it be the entrance you use most frequently. Place a bowl, basket or box on a table or counter. Drop your keys, cell phone, purse or briefcase in this place every time. Never look for keys again! A Go-Box is a place to store the things that you will take with you when you leave. Library books, videos to be returned or outgoing mail are a few examples. *I heard these terms at a NAPO meeting, (National Association for Professional Organizers.) Aren't they great!*
- Put together a Warranty File. Include all of your warranties and manuals in one place. Organize them in a box, file or binder. Separate them by room or category.
- Schedule your days. Get into a regular routine. As you do certain chores over and over you will pick up speed. You will become faster and more efficient.

**3) Eliminate the unnecessary.** This can mean many things:

- Rid your home of the clutter, knickknacks or excess furniture that weigh you down. Too much excess can make you feel drained.
- Stop over-spending. You will have less bills to pay and less guilt.
- Avoid filling your days with activities that you don't really care about.
- Limit the amount of trips you make to the store for forgotten items. *Make a list of supplies that you need and shop once a week. Menu plan and buy all of*

*the groceries that you will need at one time.*

**4) Don't forget yourself!** Take a page from the children. Children are known for their ability to get their needs met. It is important to note that this is an *important life skill* that some of us have lost along the way. In our efforts to be kind and nurturing we often neglect our own needs.


Think of the safety warnings they issue on the plane: Attach your own oxygen mask before attempting to help others. As mothers we cannot be strong, capable, efficient parents if we are running on empty!

- Here are the basics. You *know* them. But they bear repeating. Exercise. Get enough sleep. Eat balanced meals. Incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet and avoid preservatives.
- Dare to dream. Make a list of 100 things you want to accomplish before you die. Now get to it!
- Play. Be a tourist in your home town. Take your kids to the zoo. Start a new hobby. Have you always wanted to paint? Buy a canvas. If you are happy, you have so much more to give.

**5) You're not alone.** Remember that you can always reach out to others for help. Once they are old enough, delegate chores to your children. Arrange a child-care swap with a neighbor. Ask your spouse for help. Barter. If someone offers you help, *never* turn them down.

Balance is a delicate thing. Just when you think you've figured it out, circumstances change. Life is fluid. Don't despair. Roll *with* it. You *will* find your rhythm.

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