

# Efficiency Tips for Busy Parents

It's the ultimate challenge: working, raising your kids, and addressing an endless list of domestic chores. Follow these ten time-management tips and put a little more time in each day!

## **#1: Keep a log.**

Although this takes some time, it's a necessary exercise that will help you identify the time-wasters in your life. For one week, record your activities in half-hour periods. You can make one entry each day for your time at work and asleep. Don't cheat. If you usually crash in front of the tube for two hours every night, don't change your routine while keeping your log.

## **#2: Set priorities.**

Your log will show you how individual activities consume your time. Decide which activities are most important to you and which you can live without. These can be tough choices, but not making them deprives you of the time you need to really enjoy your life. Once you've set your priorities, don't add a new activity unless you subtract one. If you regularly put in extra hours on the job or bring home unfinished paperwork, you may need to discuss your workload with your boss or explore other career options.

## **#3: Delegate.**

You're probably doing chores you could pass to others. If your children are old enough, have them help around the house. Consider paying a neighborhood teen to mow your lawn. If you're in charge of the PTA fund-raiser, divide the job into several tasks and recruit volunteers to handle them.

## **#4: Lower your standards.**

Resist the urge to do things yourself because you think you'll do it better than anyone else. Maybe your standards are too high. Is it really important to keep your house and yard perfect? What's wrong with convenience foods and trips to McDonald's when you're busy? Your children will have fonder memories of the times you play with them than of the cleanliness of your floors.

## **#5: Don't over-program your kids.**

They need downtime, too. Even if they beg to sign up for every program in sight, restrict the number. They need to learn to prioritize, just as you do. Besides, the more organized activities your kids attend, the more *you're* called upon to do.

## **#6: Schedule some fun.**

Don't leave it to chance that you'll spend a leisurely weekend with your kids, go on a date with your spouse, or pursue a personal interest. Put them on your calendar, and don't let other things encroach.

## **#7: Take care of yourself.**

Give health a high priority. Don't shortchange the hours you need to sleep and the time you should exercise.

## **#8: Share the load.**

You can make your own and your friends' lives easier with carpools, baby-sitting co-ops, and other schemes for parental-cooperation schemes.

**#9: Learn to say no.**

You don't have to agree to every request. That includes those from close friends and relatives. Consider how much time the activity will consume and whether you really want to do it. Apply the subtraction technique from Step #2.

**#10: Relax.**

Stress breeds stress. Don't let yourself stay so keyed up that you can't enjoy the free time you've produced with Steps #1 through 9.