



‘Hints and Tips for Parents from Home To Workplace’

Compiled by Kirsty O’Callaghan
Unity-Qld

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Have you ever wondered how other parents do it? The 'it' in 'seem like they have it all together', 'seems like it is all working from home to workplace', 'it even seems that they are happy and children are well adjusted'.

I am blessed with some wise women in my life, and because of this I gathered hints and tips from others to help Parents when they feel that they are out of ideas and resources, and would like to get back in control and feel balanced, happy and satisfied again.

What I would like you to remember is that wisdom comes from building knowledge, gaining experience, finding what works for you; then transforming that knowledge and experience into an understanding of what actions **you decide** to take to get the results you want for your family. This in turn creates wisdom. Wisdom you can't help but share, as this document represents.

You may find you only need to implement a couple of suggestions or many. That is the point. Not one way is right for all, or not one way will work all the time. You are constantly creating, remoulding and reshaping whilst keeping up with your growth and that of your children. There is not a 'stand still' moment in a parent's life. There are moments of walking together each day on our own individual journeys in the same space. To walk with your children, supporting them and accepting them just the way they are is as important and doing this for yourself. Creating routines and skills to keep everyone on the same page and needs met is the role of you, the parent.

Many parents have chosen to meet their own needs by working from home, or in their own business so that they can be there for their children. This is a great idea, however as this document shows, consideration has to be taken into the energy it takes to be multi skilling and time needed to finish projects, as well as the commitment and discipline required to work solo – be your own boss whilst your children are demanding your time and energy.

There is no standard model that fits all families. You could be a blended family, a stay at home parent, a 2 working parent family, single parent, a carer, a grandparent, have no extended family close to support the family unit, or many other situations that are experienced within families and communities in this modern world. This does not make you wrong, right or not the norm. I would like to think this makes you unique, and in so, special. Being special gives you the opportunity to be creative within your world and resourceful enough to overcome the daily challenges you face.

This information has come from many different sources, therefore, provides unique and special points of view that have proven to work for others, and hopefully will enhance your ability to gain new experiences to nurture and encourage your creative solution finding methods. So rather than focus on the problems and what doesn't work, you can now focus on solutions and exploring what can work.

I will continue to add to this document, as I come across methods and insights that are helpful to all.



Frances Cahill - PhD candidate at QUT, Brisbane Area, Australia

Be kind to yourselves and your kids - you are all adjusting to a new pattern in your lives; don't buy a ticket on the guilt train; spending time present with them in the car on the way home and then when you get home is the best thing you can do for all of you; if you find time - do big batches of your favourite meal and freeze some (then on those days when your head is leaving your shoulders from tiredness - the block of food in the freezer becomes dinner in a jiffy); housework takes last place in priorities. My two are now much older now but both of them are capable of organising their lunches and uniforms and getting out the door mostly on time. We have a central kitchen calendar (on the fridge) and diaries to mark swimming lessons, band practice, theatre rehearsals, events outings etc and they are expected to keep track first. Mum is the fallback position not the event manager for everyone. Of course that is 18 years down the track with parenting but littlies can feel helpful if they can go and get their bag for today.....where's your hat? both shoes?



Ann Whitaker - Image Consultant, House of Colour and Image, Brisbane Area, Australia

My tip would be plan everything the night before, get the child's bag packed, know what you are going to send for lunch etc, that way you are as prepared for the morning's curveball as you can be. More business side, I would recommend any woman going back to work to go and see an image consultant for help with what to wear to flatter their new-shape body. Many women struggle to get back to corporate dressing after having an extended break, they have got lost in the quick, easy, practical and comfortable wardrobe that every mummy slips into. Unfortunately many of us mummies are also no longer the same shape we were pre-pregnancy, necessitating a new wardrobe for the workplace, a good image consultant can help them dress their new body in clothes that will maximize their appearance and also co-ordinate, resulting in a smaller wardrobe that is inter-changeable



Daniela Falecki - Founder and Director of Employers Toolbox & Adolescent Toolbox, connecting people for well-being and productivity Sydney Area, Australia

I have heaps of tips for parents on my website and blog which i would be happy to share. You can go to www.adolescenttoolbox.com.au.



Emma Street - Director Finance and Administration at Marymead Child and Family Centre Canberra Area, Australia

My number one tip is to pick child care that is as close to work as possible. The children spend less time in care and singing in the car is great bonding time. Also if you have a work crisis at the end of the day you don't have the stress of knowing you need to get across town with the clock running down. Fourth and last child started Kinder yesterday, yay!



Annalisa Armitage - Professional Speaker, Trainer and Image Consultant Sydney Area, Australia

I think it's never too early to give your kids some responsibility - don't feel like you have to do everything for them. Make them responsible for their own things, tidying up after themselves, packing school bags, practising things they are learning. We have implemented a checklist for them to tick off so they can remember what's expected and have upped their pocket money to reflect additional responsibilities (setting table, clearing table, emptying dishwasher). They feel like they contribute to the running of the household and learn life skills and means we are not doing everything allowing for more fun in the house.

For the Mums - once a woman has a decluttered wardrobe only full of clothes that work for them and know they look fabulous, everything else falls into place! Saves time, money and builds self-esteem when we get what we wear 'spot on'. Then helps us get from house to car to work in a seamless fashion (pardon the pun)



Claire McFee - Organize Your Life

Everything in our lives is interrelated. Understanding this helps us achieve better flow from one area of our lives to another and leads to more balance and better overall wellbeing . With that in mind, here are some tips to help remind you of the links from area to another, so that we are more mindful and better able to achieve a smoother running household and therefore have a more cohesive family.

No planning = chaos = precious lost time

Clutter = lower energy = less efficiency

Too little sleep = more illness = more time of work/school

No 'me time' = stress and overwhelm = 'Not happy Jan! – a happy Mum/Dad = a happy family

CONVERSELY

Planning your day and having good routines = calmer parenting and achieving more in less time

A Clutter free environment at work & home = saved time, less cleaning and better concentration

A good night's sleep = more energy throughout the day = less need for sugar and caffeine hits

Healthy diet = increased energy = higher motivation levels = more patience = more positive interactions with everyone

Regular 'me time' = a more balanced calmer life = solution focus attitude rather than problem focused attitude



Sandy McDonald - Coach at One on One Social Media Coaching Melbourne Area, Australia

I worked from home for most of my children's growing up years. They are adults now and beginning to think families of their own. They comment often about how amazing it was to have me at home when they were unwell and that I was able to attend all their school events. They also talk a lot about how long (as in hours) I worked.

On the one hand they remember me as being there for them and on the other hand as not always being available. (Memory can be selective!) On balance, I am not certain which weights up better in their minds, as they plan how they would like to tackle their parenting experience.

With the benefit of hindsight, I would advise to keep weekends free and as has already been mentioned here, your focus on the family when you are with them and not on the concerns that often plague small business, especially when it is operating from home. That might mean educating your clients too about your availability.

Personally, I would not have had it any other way. If harder work was the price to pay to be around for my daughters when they needed me, their wonderful friendship today is the very

best reward for it, (which is not to say of course, that you don't experience either of those if you work outside of the home).



Margaret Stuart at "Free to be..." Melbourne Area, Australia

I was lucky in that I was able to work from home - however I found the professional nanny hopeless, the baby sitter only wanted to watch TV so I employed two trainee art teachers who taught my boys all sorts of art work which the boys loved. Both were completely different personalities and taught very differently too - one was very messy but lots of fun , the other very organized ,tidy and lovely . My boys and I loved them both .If one was not able to make it the other could -I ensured they both had the same number of hours work each week and I was never stuck for a babysitter. The boys learnt different art forms, were safe, were in their own home and I was able to work without worry.

To ensure they had friends I also took them to playgroup for the morning once a week and later to kindergarten one to two days a week- However when I wasn't working I spent every minute with them so they grew up with my husband and my values



Liz Parker - CEO,VA Placements | Our One Team - SME fixed rate social media packages. Promote your business one package at a time! Brisbane Area, Australia

My best tip is when you are rushing home and trying to get everything organised, you will be thinking about dinner, lunches, school uniforms etc but instead of getting started right away, take 30 minutes and sit down with your kids and let them talk about their day. Always have dinner away from TV, or any distraction, around the dining room table and take time to listen to them.Ask for the highlight of their day and the lowlight. My children are now 25 and 30 with their own families and it is a great tradition when everyone is round for dinner to sit at a table and ask about highlights and lowlights. Everyone gets a say and advice flows freely.



Lissa Holgate - Coaching professional women to set career goals, overcome challenges and achieve career success., Brisbane Area, Australia

My tips are - always get up heaps earlier than you think you need to; organise whatever you can the night before; no TV (except for babysitting purposes while you do make up, etc); give

responsibility where age appropriate; and spend every possible second talking, singing, laughing and praising them to the next activity!



Mandy Cann - Consultant at Mandy Cann Consulting Brisbane Area, Australia

I have tips to share on employment matters for mums heading back to work. Be firm with availability, try and stick to the times given to your employer and be realistic with the effort bargain. Don't try and cram a full time role into part time and be respectful of yourself when compromising on issues related to availability. eg. working from home is great with a sick child but don't forget you have a sick child to look after.



Leigh Rorke-Ward - Coach, Kinesiologist, Occupational Therapist, Brisbane Area, Australia

If you have a spare bedroom and two bathrooms and aupair is fantastic and cheap, they can share the bathroom with the kids, just need their own room, wardrobe and wireless internet essential! Most of the Gen yers spend the time in their own room on facebook if they are not out and about so we barely noticed ours in the house except at dinner time where they were a welcome second set of hands.

I used an agency at first but found more success with gumtree- it was cheaper and I got to interview them face to face. The last girl stayed 6 months, taught my daughter french and was an angel. They can do flexible hours and broken shifts and are cheap - between 6 and \$10 an hour, i paid mine \$8 plus room and food and use of the second car. Having my own business the flexibility was invaluable and it allowed me to attend those WNA meetings! My advice, set the schedule of work activities and expectations from day 1. And add what it does and doesn't include in the way of food and beverages (i.e. my chocolate and alcohol!).

On a personal note- don't forget to add in one thing a week thats time for you (not work or kids) and one date a fortnight or month with your partner. Life can get very busy!



Louissa Jesson McIntyre - Insurance Broker Brisbane Area, Australia

Some of our keys to success have already been mentioned, such as daycare close to work, and our littlies love singing in the car on the way home too. If you have a long car trip or are getting home fairly late for your kids, let your kids eat in the car on the way home, otherwise they'll be too tired to eat properly when you get home (I make sure I have some fruit and

healthy sandwiches and water for the trip). Clearly, a family dinner around the table is ideal, but let's face it, when both parents are working and kids are in daycare, you don't always get the 'ideal'. Give up the guilt trip - we do the best we can! If we are home in time, or in the car if we won't be, we always make time each day to take it in turns to ask each other about our day and what we did, (Mummy and Daddy included). My husband works long hours and leaves home before the kids get up, and often gets home in time only to say goodnight, so when the kids started talking (even just a few words), we arranged for him to call the daycare during the day for a chat with the girls. It brightens all their days.



Louise Dunham - Owner, PLACEMENT SOLUTIONS Melbourne Area, Australia

I will declare my bias straightaway because I am in the childcare recruitment business but my number one tip is treat your childcarer like gold as they care for your most precious assets. The second tip is to communicate with your Childcarers every step of the way .The third develop a happy and relaxed attitude to parenting (it does rub off)



Tiina Morton - Independent Franchise Juice Plus Perth Area, Australia

Just a quick tip if you have small children at home - it works for me. Have a box of special toys that you only bring out when it's "mum's on the phone" time. When the phone calls are done the box goes away. It gives me a good half an hour or more for these important phone calls.



Helen Folwell – Principal Coach & Founder of Life After Divorce

I have run the full spectrum of looking after children, schooling, home and full time working, as a "married" parent, then as a single mother with two small children, and latterly, over the last 18 months, a full time working mother and "step" parent within a blended family "second time around" relationship now with 6 children (and the oldest daughter is happily to deliver twins shortly!!)

There are plenty of pleasures and pitfalls in our "Brady bunch" household, and I'm very open to ideas and sharing.

Blended families need a very fixed approach, which has lots of flexibility

First off there needs to be the understanding that you will need to be fiercely determined, as well as **in love** to approach the idea of moving in together with full, or part time, or a mix of both, offspring!! There needs to be a strong commitment to the relationship and a heightened tolerance to children – other partner's mainly - and most of us DON'T have that in spadeloads!!

When first making the decision to move in - do it after carefully examining each other's different parenting skills and styles, which surely you already have? If you have been living in separate houses, first I would suggest keeping this going for as long as possible, with lots of sleepovers in each other's spaces before doing something irreparable - like abolishing independent thoughts, movements, fridges and pantries! Check out each other's attitudes to bedtimes, fridge raids, tidying, cleaning and generally foisting responsibility on your children - the younger as well as the older ones. Teenagers are the biggest challenge, but will be even more so to you, if you are used to 6 year olds wanting to please you.

Check out how many times either of you correct the other (hopefully in private!) on what they have just done "wrong" as a parent and see if you actually agree on any ground at all. There are bound to be differences; for instance, if you have always run your house with military precision, kid's et al, then you may discover that your laid back gorgeous partner has a "Holiday Inn" approach to children. It is worth noting at this juncture that there are a lot of weekend/holiday fathers out there who love to spoil their children when they have them, having not seen them for 10 days!! As a result if you are a single mum who puts her kids through their paces, you are going to find it tough watching real fatherly love extend to 24/7 lying around on sofas with takeouts; something you may not have seen in your previous separate lives.

Living together in a "blended" arrangement will be the most difficult but rewarding family you can have. You will spot that your partners differences (that you fell in love with) may now come back to haunt you! If he or she has incredible attention to detail, then don't expect them to turn into a slouch where the kids are concerned - they will still be capable, impatient and orderly and everyone better get used to it! If you admire Homer Simpsons ability to create a couch angel, then let's hope no one expects YOU to be supervising clean ups of all those takeouts!

Inevitably there will be stuff you both agree on, but stuff you don't. **But it's no good making all the kids have that One Rule!!** If you really do run a tight ship on the cleaning front, but your partner never has (i.e., from the life's too short to do housework school) then you are going to be challenged no end. If a child goes from no real housework chores to suddenly being made to step up, they will think you are a tyrant. If a child goes from disciplined, routine best behaviour to leaping across the couches playing bulldog with your partner and his kids, it is no doubt going to earn them a few reprimands!

Maybe you have to both agree on your differences, and then one of you steps up, and maybe then calms down - you HAVE to meet in the middle before someone gets resentful.

The **One Rule** approach certainly works in some situations: making one evening meal is a no brainer; switching off fans, lights and TVs is obvious, and so is talking back and making a swamp of the bathroom, but if his kids are used to sucking up soft drink and lollies and you're

a health nut (where your children are concerned anyway - LOL!) then you will need to start finding a compromise - this can be force feeding your own children quietly in another room whilst his are dieting elsewhere on a walk out exercising!!

Ultimately the differences between your parenting styles can be an absolute blessing: my small boys love playing DS whilst I haven't a clue! My partner is happily juvenile enough to actively embrace a good Wii game, and is more than easily persuaded to take part in a DS competition with 8 and 9 yr olds. Nicely for me, he has two adolescent daughters who love nothing better than to walk for 3 - 4 hrs around the air conditioned splendour of our local mall, and I just love taking them (this is mainly to avoid looking after my own children playing DS!!). It means I now have a great relationship with them, know what motivates them, and can make myself available to pick out clothes and hand them in and out of changing rooms. I also like talking, whilst my boys beg me to finish - I have no such trouble with the girls!! My partner and I can help each other out this way equally, and this sharing of our time and our children engenders massive amounts of good will and getting to know each other!

Common Pitfalls:

Thinking "we are in love, we will be fine" - this is a clear case of where sometimes love just isn't enough - compromise and motivation are two big words here. Remember too, there is no I in teamwork! You can't force your parental beliefs on anyone other than your own children, I've heard of a mother who has insisted on her new mummy counterpart NOT giving breakfast to her 11 yr old daughter when she had a tantrum about it one morning before school! You'd think Mummy#2 was doing her a service!! You just can't get with other people's parenting sometimes.....

Partner's generosity should not only be extended to you. Don't get excited about your partner being wonderfully generous to his children, even if you think it misplaced, or the child doesn't deserve it, or isn't old enough to appreciate it. It's not your business unless he or she is using your funds to do so! Surely you fell in love with them for their generous approach? Do NOT, repeat, and do NOT be mean with your partner's children.

Don't get jealous of the attention and time your partner gives his or her own children. Apply every "wrong" they may do under this banner to yourself, and add a large pinch of generosity - this gives rise to an amazing amount of good will. Let them be together, and you keep yourself busy to stop becoming jealous. Use the time to be with your own children; they watch a movie together, you guys watch a movie together! Remember, your children are the most important component part of your relationship - be a grown up. **The onus is on you NOT to be ridiculous!** Too many relationships don't get past this type of misdemeanour. Sometimes partners feel neglected or left out, because if you have moved in together I doubt you are still in a honeymoon phase. The honeymoon of children doesn't last long either, but it mustn't be obstructed - keep your eye on the ball of "good parent spending time with kids" and occupy yourself.

Arguing with 7 year olds is not on - leave out thinking that everything their children say or do is designed to mess with your head! Arguing on anything at all will NOT work, especially if you are on your own with no witnesses! Do what they do in the army and think "accountability" - when their Officer is in, report them and sidle off. Leave them to it. Don't hang around to watch, or to see they mete out a suitable punishment, via your rules. They

can do what they like with the information, it's not up to you to pull rank, unless you want to sacrifice the relationship if it happens frequently

NB If your partner constantly feels between a rock and a hard place, you will be the first to go. Check on how much you value the relationship over how much you value being right - whether you are or not their children will come first, and they will stop supporting you. They don't have to live up to your rules, they can actually check out and do exactly what they want without you leaning over them and spoiling their fun.

Forgetting you are in a relationship - It's best to keep enough time to yourselves to constantly refresh your feelings for each other. Sometimes these feelings get buried under all that cooking, cleaning, organising and trying to get on! Remember that you have to protect the relationship, otherwise there is no point in all the constant reviews - there are many opportunities to do this, and the obvious is making sure you both have your children at the same time, so that they go to their other respective parents at the same time too. This way you are guaranteed a couple of "mini breaks" a month yourselves!! This gives ample time to recharge and refresh whatever you want to (!) and plenty of compensation for the tough times ahead - like the quality time with your children on the kids' weekends!

The biggest way to get on with this successfully is tell yourself two things - the arguing will always be there, but hopefully so will the wonder of the relationship and the will to see out this particular phase. The kids will grow up and leave you, (fingers crossed!) but you might as well relax enough to enjoy the contentment of looking around at your extended, blended family; watching them all eating together, playing together and making memories together. You'll feel a lot better giving up some control and genuinely getting to know all your children, and your partner will love you even more for it. Don't forget too - the dream for the kids and their parent, was smashed first time around, it takes a lot of trust and commitment to try to get a "new family" stability together for the kids and you as parents. You have an amazing and potentially hugely fulfilling opportunity.

The second thing is to remind yourselves too that **100% Natural Parents STILL in their marriages argue non-stop about their children**, so you two are certainly not competing with anything that was amazingly harmonious(!) You have nothing to compete with, you can only be an improved version of "home" if you consistently strive to improve and get things right between you for the children. They may not all be yours, but you are in this relationship second time round, hopefully because you have already learned something, and you've picked a partner this time for compatibility with yourself. That in itself can only make things better for the children, as long as you are child focused.

Before long you can become a happy team, if not Team Brady!



KIRSTY O'CALLAGHAN

My top tips:

- Have a flexible routine
- Make time for your partner
- Make time for you
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- Use a weekly planner
- Eat healthy and educate your children on healthy choices
- Get creative with exercise
- Put daily value on yourself, pat yourself on the back
- Get up each morning with a grateful affirmative attitude and a desire to meet all challenges with a smile.
- Improve and expand your knowledge and learning constantly.
- Do not define yourself by your children's behaviour; define yourself by your efforts.
- Don't miss the moments.
- Have an I Can Do It attitude, and even more importantly an I Won't Give Up approach
- When life gets hard, and the storms are coming from everywhere, like an oak tree, put your roots deeper.
- Never take what your child says or does personally, breath, and reassure yourself that the next conversation will be better.
- Children thrive when parents are happy. Children feel safe when parents are calm.
- Choose your battles carefully.
- The most important lessons for your children that you can model: Love life so that they will, with effort comes reward, the daily disciplines create results, speak well of others, life is not confusing it is a puzzle to solve and a good communicator is one that listens with their ears, eyes and heart and is heard as well as hears.
- Never judge a person, especially a child by their 'worst' day.
- If you make a mistake or get 'it' wrong, teach your children that this will happen in everyone's life, it is what you do after the error in judgement that matters and how you move on.

If you would like to contribute please contact Kirsty at www.unity-qld.com.au

We would really appreciate your ideas and feedback and look forward to growing this document for all parents to benefit from. You are welcome to share this with your friends, colleagues and family members.

Happy Parenting and Happy You!

Kirsty O'Callaghan

Owner, Parenting Expert & Principal Coach Unity-Qld

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