

WINNING AT WORK AS A WORKING PARENT PLAYBOOK

STEP 1: Know Your Why. Why do you work? (self-reflection exercise)

STEP 2: Explore the How: 5 Big Plays

1. Make deliberate choices about what I want in life.
2. Regularly communicate about what's working and what isn't.
3. Set aside time for family, friends and important interests.
4. Present or absent, but not both.
5. Develop a strong support network.

STEP 3: Determine Your What: Turn the Big Plays into Commitments

1. I will make deliberate choices about what I want in life.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

2. I will regularly communicate about what's working and what isn't.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

3. I will set aside time for family, friends and important interests.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

4. I will be present or absent, but not both.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

5. I will develop a strong support network.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

BUILDING A MEANINGFUL CAREER AS A WORKING PARENT: REAL IDEAS FROM REAL PARENTS

Idea 1: One thing I try to do is to give understanding and pride to my kids regarding why I work so much: so, I bring them to work with me when I can. It might only be one day a year, or a half day here and there instead of a sitter, or even for an hour –but I take them around the office, let them meet my colleagues and get to know who mommy works with. Sometimes I give them small assignments like getting papers off of the copier and let them see their pictures on my desk - they think it's the coolest thing in the world. It also shows my team the mommy side of me and helps them understand why I need flexibility.

Idea 2: One thing we do is set a cut off time for work—after 5:30— our work is done until the kids go to bed. There are times when I do have to answer a pressing email, but I do not look at my phone. Instead, I prioritize my family during that 3 hour window.

Idea 3: I've stepped down from a couple volunteer board positions, even though they were advantageous for my career, to have more time with my family. I also have been honest with my manager about what I need to be most successful at my job and happiest with my career.

Idea 4: I take off one day a month to be with my son – I am on PTO, I plan for it, and it is communicated and coordinated with client deliverables. But, that allows me to be fully present with my son.

Idea 5: Being a part of the “little moments” helps make all the difference for me. As a working parent, it's easy to feel like I should plan big “events” and experiences for my kids to compensate for some of the time I miss, but I've found my kids enjoy much smaller (and easier!) things. Like, eating breakfast with them every day, even if it's just cereal. Or having lunch with them (lots of our “little moments” are food related).

Idea 6: We have a time that we sit down together as parents to plan out our schedule for the week. This helps us and our kids know what the priorities are for the week.

Idea 7: My spouse and I have made arrangements so we can carpool to work. And it's a no phone zone. This allows us to connect in the morning and to unload and decompress as a couple. I think it helps that when we get home that we can switch to “parent mode” and give our daughter our attention... and try to correct that super fun biting stage she's currently in.

Idea 8: For attending school events for the kids, I let the kids pick- I'll say Christmas party or honor roll celebration? It lets them know I want to be there but also lets them choose which is more important to them. And I am not ragged from trying to be at everything for three children.

Idea 9: We have chosen to limit evening events away from the kids to 2 nights a week (unless traveling). I pick the top 2 and that's it.

Idea 10: We just try to eat dinner together as much as possible. We specifically protect Tuesday nights—the kids are in middle school and they know not to make plans. Now, dinner is rarely ever home cooked and nothing special—pizza or Chinese is common—but the time together is priceless.

Idea 11: I have a spouse who works a lot of nights and weekends. Instead of me getting frustrated that he worked every other weekend...I called them Mama adventure weekends and I planned special memories with our boys during those times—we'd go on “hiking adventures” in the woods behind our house, go to a museum or go to a baseball game.

Idea 12: I've incorporated my children into my work. Every month our kids (7 & 5 years old) help me write down my goals for the month on a big board. The boys ask me questions on how it is going. Their favorite question to ask: “Mama did you hustle today?”. Kids see the impact of their parents working with passion.

Idea 13: This one is going to sound old school, but we decided not to turn on the tv in the evenings. We play, we talk about the day, we go outside together. My children are 14, 11, 7 and 1.

Idea 14: We are honest with our children when they ask where Mommy is. I say she's at work. I then explain on her terms what she does. When they ask why we have to go to work, we say we work so that we can have our home and we can eat yummy things and we can take them on fun adventures. I tell them, too, that I love being with them but that working is something that also makes Mommy feel good about herself and that helps me be a better Momma to her.

Idea 15: This one is extremely practical, but it changed our life: we have groceries delivered or use ClickIt so I can pick them up fast.

Idea 16: I keep a gift closet and a card file. When I find something I like, or at a good price, I often get multiples and save them. A little organized storage now means a lot more family time and feeling less pushed during non- work time to run errands.

Idea 17: This can be unpopular, we aren't rigid about schedules. We are flexible when we can be about bedtimes, or baths every night when mine were younger- because the time we spend together is more important.

Idea 18: We have learned to accept help when it's offered. We live by the motto, "It takes a village."

Idea 19: My wife and I split up the drop off and pick up duty at daycare. This gives both of us one on one time in the car with our daughter to talk and sing on the way to school and on the way home.

Idea 20: I have learned to say "no" to anything that doesn't add joy for our family.

Idea 21: As much as my husband and I both wanted to be at every activity and school function, we knew it wasn't a reality with both of us working. So, we worked together to understand each other's schedule, which played an important part in assuring our children that what they did was important to us and one of us (not always both) would be there to support them.

Idea 22: If my son has an event that I want to go to, I take my computer and work from a location that's closer to his school so I don't waste time driving back and forth to the house.

Idea 23: I try not to talk about working much around my kids, or say "I can't do _____ with you because mommy needs to work." I don't want them to associate me working with being too busy for them. It's not that I hide my work or am ashamed of it, but I try to mention it in a positive way to them ("mommy worked really hard and finished a fun project today!") vs a way they may find as negative - I redirect a lot. If they ask to do something during my work hours, I tell them "I would LOVE to do that, let's do that together after you have a fun day playing with [daycare friends/teacher/babysitter]." Instead of, "Yes, after work." As for succeeding in my career, I think having kids has made me better at my job - I keep my eye on the prize, stay completely focused so I can finish up the day quicker, and I think I'm actually more creative than I used to be because of all the oddball questions I field from toddlers.