Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

A family-friendly balance for working fathers

Balancing time between career and family can be a challenge. In fact, many men who are in the career-building phase of their lives get caught between the demands of the job and the demands of their family. Many have young children who require their time and attention, and many experience the guilt of missing important moments in their children's lives.



As a result there are a growing number of men looking for new ways to have a career and still participate in the joys of parenting and fatherhood. So, for those busy fathers and guardians who want to relish the rewards of being a parent and stay connected with their families, here are a few tips that may help.

Prioritize meaningful events in your children's lives. Write them in your day planner and plan your work around them. You book work-related meetings and appointments in your planner, so why not give the same level of importance to activities that are significant to your children?

Promote a family-friendly workplace. Organize a "bring your kids to work day" or a "kids luncheon" that all employees and their children can participate in. Have photographs of your family in your workspace and, if appropriate, put your children's artwork and achievements on show for all to see. Not only will this give your work environment a family-friendly focus, it will also serve as a reminder to you about 'the most important job of all.'

Adjust your work schedule. Talk to your employer about adjusting your work schedule so that you can start and leave earlier or later. This could allow you either extra time in the morning with your children to hear about their plans for the day, or a special time in the evening to hear about how they spent that day.

Participate in the occasional school activity. You don't have to commit every week; children love it when their fathers get involved in any aspect of their world. By getting involved in the occasional school-related activity, you not only make that event special for your children, but you gain insight into their lives and pick up useful information about their friends and interests.

Remember it is quality and not quantity that makes a difference. If you have a hectic schedule, even 15 minutes out of each day to tell a bedtime story, or a couple of hours each week to watch a Saturday afternoon movie can make a difference. Children generally look forward to these special times and will associate their relationship with their fathers with these enjoyable activities.

Share responsibilities with your partner. Talk to your partner about sharing household responsibilities such as cooking dinner, doing laundry or cleaning the house. This will help reduce stress and give each parent or guardian one-on-one time with the children.

Be flexible. Make the most of the time you have together and welcome yourself into your children's world. Be open to change and unplanned happenings. You'll quickly find that the freedom brings out the best in you, and your family.

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Learn to play. Too often we focus on rules, routine and the serious business of running a home. Take the time to have fun with your children and make it a part of each day. Children often express their true personalities and feelings through play. You may discover just how imaginative, spontaneous and resourceful your children are.

Get support. Communicate regularly with family members and friends. Don't hesitate to seek support that could help your home and family life run smoother. This can mean extra help with chores, projects around the house or preparing for special events.

Often, family members are happy to help, they just need to be asked. Not only will this give you the extra help that you need, you will be able to accomplish routine tasks faster so that you can spend more time with your family.

Being involved in your child's upbringing can produce benefits in their skills and abilities that can carry over into adulthood. Therefore, it is important to take action, and show an interest in your child's activities, hobbies and outings to encourage their development.