

# Working Solutions

## Time Management Tips for Busy Parents

Pick up any popular “time management” book these days and you’ll see the same list of quick fixes: prioritize, delegate, learn to say “no”—the list goes on. But while these rules of thumb are helpful in the office, it’s hard to “delegate” with children. Or is it? How can today’s busy parents learn to streamline their schedules while keeping the kids in the picture?

### Choosing Child Care

Perhaps the easiest way to manage your time effectively is to pick the best child care arrangement for your family. If you have a long commute, for example, you might want to pick a child care center that’s close to your office. This way, car time can be spent interacting with your child—telling stories on the way to work, asking questions about your child’s day on the way home. This mental buffer can also help ease the transition from work to home, which many parents find particularly stressful.

Other families find that the convenience of having an in-home child care provider is well worth the cost. Being able to rely on a day-nanny who arrives on time, or a live-in caregiver who is ready to take over the kids before you leave, can ease the strain many working parents face in the morning.

Finding the child care situation that best suits your needs can make all the difference in your daily routine, not to mention relieving your sense of worry so you can concentrate on your work during the day.



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## Hungry Mouths

Finding a child care situation that includes meals is another way to whittle down your daily time commitments. Many centers and family day cares will feed your children, and most nannies will prepare food during the day, whether or not they help the family with dinner.

If you find a good child care provider who doesn't provide meals or snacks during the day, consider preparing the next day's food while you're making dinner. Some parents make food for the whole week and freeze it (for both lunches and dinners), others rely on pre-packaged options. Of course, what works for your family will depend on the ages of your children and the types of foods they will eat. For example, if your kids are older, leftovers from the previous night's meal are often suitable for lunch. Time-saving recipes can also help cut down on food preparation.

## Maximize the Morning

Many parents find the mornings to be the most stressful time of the day. You've got to feed and dress the children, make beds, find missing objects, and help get the kids ready to go—let alone get yourself ready for work. Even on a "smooth day" this can seem hectic, but imagine dropping your child off at the child care center and realizing that you've forgotten something: your daughter's favorite stuffed animal, or her lunch, or the child care monthly check, or a signed permission slip to have a family friend pick her up that day. What can be done to avoid this scene?

Time management experts recommend establishing a morning routine—the same things are done every morning, in the same order, at roughly the same time. Although this can be difficult to implement, it can help in the long run—when you run on auto-pilot you're less likely to forget anything. In addition, creating an area for all "child care necessities" can help save time later, whether you take your child to day care or have an in-home caregiver. Everything from a favorite blanket to an important form can be placed in this spot (often by the door), which you can easily check on your way out of the house.

## Prioritize

Perhaps the most essential piece of time management is prioritization. Before you can really achieve a true work-family balance, you need to have a clear understanding of what you're trying to accomplish. If spending time with your family is more important than working late, you should obviously come home earlier. But if career advancement *and* quality family time are both important, something else will have to give. With a clear idea of what your priorities are, you'll be able to identify your version of the perfect balance—and then achieve it. ■ **Source: Find Care Now**

## AWP Can Provide Time Management Tips

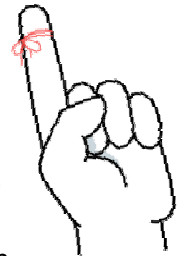
Your Employee Assistance Program is a benefit provided by your company at no cost to you. All services are confidential. For more information about child care resources and time management, call:

**Toll Free: 800-343-3822 • TDD: 800-448-1823**

**Teen Helpline: 800-334-TEEN (8336)**

## Get a Memory Makeover

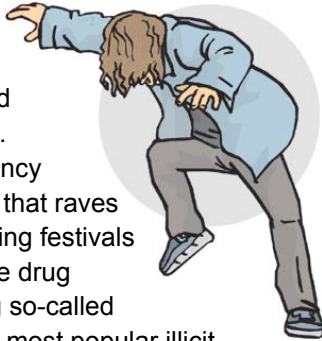
You have entered middle age, and you think your memory is slipping—you misplace objects, walk into a room and forget why you are there, and forget names. Is it simply old age, or could lifestyle be to blame? The good news (or bad news depending on your perspective) is that it is probably your lifestyle. UCLA researchers just completed a study demonstrating that in 14 days, subjects could improve their memory with an improved diet, daily exercise, increased mental activity and stimulation, and stress reduction exercises. The control group (those that did not participate in the improved healthier lifestyle program) were allowed to continue with their original sedentary lifestyles. The results demonstrated measurable chemical changes in the part of the brain that controls memory function for the experimental group. The implications for the research relate to the possible prevention of age-related dementia. ■ **Source: UCLA and Memory Fitness Institute**



## Rave Reviews

Raves are dance gatherings of people who enjoy loud, rapidly pounding, “techno” music, often accompanied by psychedelic lights and visual effects. Raves originated in Europe during the 1980s and are now popular in the United States along with a significant rave and Internet culture.

Although many club goers are not interested in using drugs, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency would like you to know that raves are frequently drug-taking festivals complete with elaborate drug paraphernalia for using so-called “club drugs.” The three most popular illicit drugs used and sold at raves include MDMA (Ecstasy), GHB (also known as the “rape drug”), and Ketamine, a frequently stolen animal tranquilizer, also called “Special K.”



You should be concerned about your adolescent’s interest in “raving.” DEA intelligence shows that drugs are becoming openly used, commonplace, and often ignored by private security guards hired at raves. ■ **Source: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration**

## Your Free Credit Report

**The Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act** (FACT Act) signed into law last year allows you to get a free copy of your credit report from Experian, Equifax, and Trans Union credit bureaus. You can obtain your free credit reports this year based upon a schedule determined by law. Go to [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) to see when your state is eligible. A simple verification process is required. You can get your report online or have it sent in the mail. Call 1-877-322-8228 to request your credit reports by phone. ■

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## Reflecting on Your Customer Service

**Evaluating your** customer service skills can be easier than you think. Try this simple experiment. For a couple of weeks, notice the type of customer service you get as you visit stores or speak with customer service representatives on the phone. You will think about making improvements in your customer service skills if you experience any of the following customer gripes, and recognize that they are things you do:



1. No “eye contact” from the salesperson.
2. One-word answers to complex questions.
3. No smile.
4. Refusal to see or notice your struggle or concern over a product, and not stepping forward to offer help.
5. Refusal to look at you, or acknowledge your presence, when a delay in serving you is unavoidable. ■

## The Art of a Softer Confrontation

**The National Institute on Drug Abuse** (NIDA) demonstrated in a study that brief confrontations of drug addicts who came to a doctor’s office for routine follow-up medical appointments increased the likelihood of their eventually achieving abstinence. Peer counselors conducted the interviews and analysis shows that the structure used in the interviews reduced defensiveness and increased rapport. The approach improved the addict’s willingness to examine drug use more honestly, see symptoms of addictive disease in their experience, and accept help. The confrontation model included (1) asking permission to discuss drug use, (2) participating in a discussion with the addict about the use of drugs and how it was getting in the way of what

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the patient wanted for his or her life, (3) discussing the addict's readiness to change and encouraging him or her to accept help, and (4) attempting to motivate the patient to accept a better plan to achieve abstinence.

### Significance

Family and close friends play key roles in motivating alcoholics and drug addicts to accept help. However, they are often unsuccessful when an unstructured provocative approach is used that increases defensiveness. This study demonstrates that a non-provocative approach with structure could eventually motivate an alcoholic/ addict to get help or accept treatment. ■

**Source: NIH News, January 5, 2005, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, Jan. 2005.**



Do you need tips on helping a loved one with a substance abuse problem? Do you want assistance for yourself? AWP can help. Call toll free 800-343-3822, 24 hours a day.

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## Blind to Safety

**Construction has** a much higher rate of eye injuries than any other industry. More than 10,600 eye injuries each year force construction workers to miss work. Nails, tiny pieces of metal, splinters, and cut wire fly in the air. Mixing of cement, sawing, grinding, and chipping produces dust and grit—so does heavy machinery moving across a site. Chemicals and welding arc can burn your eyes. If you are not careful, you can hurt your eyes or go blind. Wear the proper eyewear and safety equipment. If you work for a subcontractor, particularly a small company less likely to enforce safety standards, you may be more likely to take shortcuts, practice risky behavior, and ignore safety rules that lead to injury. *Don't do it.* ■



## The Art of "Calendaring"

**Don't get mad** at your appointment calendar—get even. If you find it difficult to fit personal time into a hectic schedule, assign dates and times for fun events throughout the month that will give you a lift and the feeling of balance you want. Examples: a trip to the coffee shop with a good book for a couple of hours; special time with a child; working in your garden; going through those old photographs that need sorting; seeing a movie, etc. Once you plan personal time that gives you balance, you will discover you are using all of your time more wisely. ■



*Your EAP is designed to help you deal with life stresses and a variety of personal challenges. For confidential services offered at no cost to all employees and their families, please call:*



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