

Tip Sheet: Mommy Guilt

Tips for Dealing with “Mommy Guilt” as a Working Mother

1. Set realistic expectations: Make peace with the idea that you do not need to be present for every moment of your child's day. While it is understandable that working mothers fear missing out on their child's special moments, being honest about what you are capable within the mix of work and parenting responsibilities is critical.

2. Remember why you chose to be a working mom: Taking the time to periodically reflect on and write down the reasons you wanted to continue working can serve as a positive reminder of the purpose behind your dual role. In addition to helping the household financially, working is often an outlet for stimulation, connectedness to the outside world, and a stronger sense of personal identity for a parent.

3. Stop the judgments: Remind yourself that “there is no ‘right way’ to raise a child.” Your current working situation and place of employment are not necessarily static, so “check in” every so often to evaluate how well your current job dynamic aligns with your family's needs.

4. Be present when you're at home: Use your time at home for quality time with your children. Seemingly small steps can have large impact for your family. For example, when you come home from work, leave your phone in your car, away in a drawer, or in another location away from you for 90 minutes so you can detach from work, at least for a little while. Focusing on and even taking pictures of your “good mom moments”- like outings with your children, activities that you do with them, and so on- will help you recognize your hard work and provide reassurance when you are feeling guilty.

share.

Working-Moms Guilt Complex, Working Mother, 2 March 2016

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Working mothers can also take more tangible steps to overcome “mommy guilt.” For example, you can:

-Seek out support from other working moms: Talking about your feelings and experiences as a working mother with others managing the same role can be helpful. Friend groups, community groups, and even online working mother blogs and forums are often good outlets.

-Seek out quality childcare: Knowing that your child is well taken care of when they are not with you is critical. Select daycares, nannies, and babysitters on the basis of set criteria, such as length of experience, quality of references, background checks and licensing where applicable, flexibility, and low provider-to-child ratios. Take the time to seek out recommendations from your personal network, interview every potential caretaker, and schedule an evaluative “playdate” between the caretaker and your child before hiring them.

-Make your mornings easier: Organizational steps, like taking care of mundane tasks the night before (like packing lunches, putting out keys and backpacks near the door, planning breakfast, etc) and dividing tasks and errands between yourself and partner in advance, will reduce the potential rush before leaving for work and school. Set a family schedule and to-do list for the day.

-Create and maintain a family calendar: An all-inclusive calendar (either physical or digital) that contains every family member’s upcoming events, tasks, and deadlines will help keep your family organized and reduce the number of surprises that come up throughout the course of the day. In the same organizational vein, you should consider creating a dedicated “family command station” near an entrance-way or in a central location where all important papers, batteries, chargers and other tools, and spare cash is kept.

-Communicate with your employer: Before discussing leave periods, flexible work schedules, or PTO with a supervisor, manager, or HR representative, “construct a written plan detailing what you need.” Research your company and comparable companies’ relevant policies and decide in advance how much you need and are willing to share.

-Create special family activities: Regularly schedule in activities and family time during the week and/or on weekends. This gives the whole family a block of time that they look forward to and helps children know what to expect in the course of the week.

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-Stay connected with your children throughout the day: Quick calls or text conversations with your child while on work breaks can help both of you feel more comfortable throughout the day. For younger children, leaving “reminders” of yourself and your partner, such as pictures, videos, or recordings of your voice, can create a sense of closeness even when you are away from the home. If you must miss all or part of a child’s special event, consider leaving a small gift or personal note the morning of and look into the possibility of recording the event in some way so you can experience it later on.

-Limit distractions and time wasters: While at home, set limits completing tasks that can be postponed, like phone calls and emails, and potentially unnecessary activities, like watching television, to maximize time spent with your partner and children. Try to avoid multitasking at home if possible. At work, try to boost your productivity and avoid distractions so that you can reduce the amount of time you need to spend on work outside of the office.

-Create moments for yourself: Focusing on even the most basic elements of self-care, like eating well and getting enough sleep, can have far-reaching effects. Force yourself to schedule in personal care and personally enjoyable activities, like reading a book, doing yoga, or maintaining a hobby, will help you to feel recharged and better able to balance responsibilities.

10 Ways Moms Can Balance Work and Family, Parents, 2017.