

IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES

Family Life: The Juggling Act

In our culture, the push to “do more, be more, have more” is strong. Identifying what matters to you and your family can be the anchor you need to stand up for yourself against that push. Use the following questions to help you think about what should be prioritized in your family. Include your partner or other caregivers in this discussion and your children as appropriate.

Part I: What is important?

What are the most important things you want your kids to get/learn from their childhood?

What do you see as your purpose – as a person, a parent, and a partner?

How would you like your children to describe you to their friends?

If you had a clear schedule with no obligations, what would you do? As an individual? As a family?

What were you doing when you remember being the happiest?

How important is money? If you won the lottery, what would you do with the money?

When is your family at their best? What is most satisfying for each family member?

When is your family at their worst? What is most challenging for each family member?

What are things that build your family up?

What are things that weaken your family?

What do you, as a family, value the most? (It can be several things.)

Think about your answers. Talk about what they mean. Put together a statement that spells out what you as a family feel is most important. What is the mission of your family?

Example: We believe that our family's purpose is to love, appreciate, and support one another. Our goal is to help one another to be the best we can be and find our path in the world. We believe in treating other people and the environment with respect. We value working with integrity and living with simplicity. We celebrate learning, laughter, and friendship.

Our Family Mission Statement:

Part II: Compare your actions

Look at your mission statement and think about your schedule. Think about what you do each day. Think about your family obligations and commitments over the course of a year. How much of your resources – time, energy, and money – are supporting those qualities that you feel are most important? Be honest.

Can you see where other attitudes, maybe some misconceptions, have crept in? Constant juggling can leave you exhausted. This can set the stage for your actions to shift away from what you care about (e.g. *giving in to your teen's pleas for high cost, name-brand clothing, turning your back on living more simply*). Or maybe you have you weighted some more values heavily and had to then shortchange others (e.g. *lots of "working with integrity" leaves little time to "celebrate laughter"*).

Which items in your mission statement are getting the least of your resources?

Part III: Decide on priorities

Now give yourself permission to start fresh. Use your answers from the questions above to make a short list of what you would like to move up on your priority list. Use this list as a jumping off point to talk with your family about making changes.

Examples:

Living simply: Talk together about what the trade-offs are for having lots of "things."

Appreciate one another: Commit to making it to most of your child's sporting events this season.

Our Family Rebalancing Goals:



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FIND YOUR STRESS POINTS

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It can be hard to make changes when you are busy juggling. Find your stress points to help you see where to direct your efficiency, limiting, and nurturing moves.

WHEN do things get tight or stressful? Review your typical schedule for challenges and periods of overload. Examples could be weekday mornings, crunch times at work, or the holidays.

In your day

In your week

In the month

Seasonally

WHAT commitments frequently lead to stress? Examples might be missing your child's events or regularly being late to work.

Work related (include commuting and overtime)

School related

Extracurricular activities

Child care arrangements

Community obligations

WHO? Stress in relationships with others may mean you are giving too much (or not enough) of yourself and your resources (money, time, energy) to those people. Example: continually putting off calling friends.

Children

Partner

Other family members

Work relationships

Friends

HOW do your choices create stress? Look over your answers. Do you see any patterns?

Over-scheduling

Over-indulgence

Over-committing

Over-spending

Too much driving

Not prioritizing well

Other issues

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RECLAIM THE LIFE YOU WANT

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To reclaim the life you want, you have to commit to doing things differently. Use the stress points you identified and the ideas we covered today to help you think about where and how you can make changes. Fill in the moves you can make below.

Efficiency moves

Ask yourself: How could I approach this differently? Is there another way? Who could help?
(*Example: Set up a carpool with several other families on your child's sports team.*)

Seminar strategies:

Everyone pitches in
Do double duty
Plan ahead
Look beyond your norms

What are YOUR efficiency moves?

Limiting moves

Ask yourself: What is this costing me? What am I giving up to have/do this? Can I eliminate it?
(*Example: Limit each family member to no more than two extracurricular activities per season.*)

Seminar strategies:

Let go of perfection
Discipline yourself to say "no"
Evaluate choices with a true cost filter
Think in terms of how much is enough?

What are YOUR limiting moves?

Nurturing moves

Ask yourself: What do my priorities say I need? How can I add that now?
(*Example: Commit to putting some type of family vacation on the calendar every year, no exception.*)

Seminar strategies

Learn to be present and listen
Plan sacred family time
Allow fun to be a goal.

What are YOUR nurturing moves?

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