

What to Know

One of the issues that dads face in being the best dads they can be is balancing work and family. Indeed, a national survey of dads (called Pop's Culture) found that work duties are **the main issue** dads face in being the best dads they can be.



You've likely received the message that today's dads can and should be more than a financial provider. You've also likely received the message that dads must spend long hours at work to get ahead. These competing messages pull dads in two directions, which can cause a great deal of stress in trying to balance the demands of work and family.

Many dads and employers think that when a dad balances work and family that he won't be as productive or advance at work. The fact is dads who balance work and family are more productive at work than fathers who don't. And they advance faster and farther than dads who focus on work at the expense of their families.

Why do dads who balance work and family succeed at work and at home? Part of the reason is they're happier with their lives. They have the best of both worlds, success at work and at home. So they're:

- More likely to be focused when at work.
- Less likely to suffer the stress that comes with long hours at work.
- Less likely to call in sick just to spend time with their families or to recover from illness.
- More committed to their employers overall.

If you struggle to balance work and family, it's vital that you find ways to do so. These ways must fit with your situation. If you work two or three jobs to make ends meet, for example, then you can spend only so much time with your family. Still, there might be ways you can increase the time you spend with your family. The rest of the information in this topic will help you think of ways to balance work and family as best you can.

What Else

Balance might mean something different to you than to other dads. Tailor your approach to succeed for you, your family, and your employer(s). Just make sure you maintain your duties to family and work given your work situation.

No matter your work situation, you should be able to start with only one or two actions that will help you better balance work and family. Take these steps:

- **Step 1:** Think about one or two actions you will do.
- **Step 2:** Write down the action(s). State how and when you will do the action(s). Include who needs to help you carry out the action(s), such as your boss or the mother of your children.
- **Step 3:** Every month review the success of your action(s). If the action(s) involved anyone else, have them take part in the review. Ask why the action(s) worked or didn't work. Decide whether to keep doing the action(s). If you decide to not do the action(s) any longer, replace the action(s) with another one. If you decide to keep doing the action(s), add a new action(s) that will help you further balance work and family.

What to Ask

Reflect on each of the questions below. Take your time. Write your answers if you like.

1. Do I fear that if I try to balance work and family, my employer won't value me as much as they do now? Is this fear based in reality?
2. How much control do I have over my work schedule? Do I have enough control over it so that I can spend more time with my family?
3. Does my employer offer benefits that can help me balance work and family? Do I use them?
4. How can I work with my employer to balance work and family?
5. When I'm at home, do I spend as much time as I can with my family? What more can I do to spend more time with them?

Learn More

Use these tips to better balance work and family.

Tell Co-Workers about Your Family Commitment: Talk with your boss and friends at work about your desire to balance work and family. This action will show them that you won't sacrifice family for your job.

Make Your Boss Your Ally: Working with your boss requires honesty, trust, and hard work. Work with your boss to create ways that help you meet your duty to both your job and family. One great way is to record your progress on the job in a weekly report to your boss. This action can help your boss judge what you do rather than focus only on when you're present.

Stay Busy and Focused: Get your job done during the day so that you can get home to your family. Let people know that you mean business when it comes to getting the job done. At the end of the day, you can relax knowing that you put in a full day of work.

Be a Team Player: Offer to help your co-workers and boss on special projects. It's a great way to prove that you can be flexible when needed. Treat people the way they want to be treated, and they'll help you balance your work and family.

Be Choosy With Special Jobs: Think before you agree to overtime work or special jobs. It may be tempting to have the extra money or respect, but it may mean you'll have less time with your family.

Show Your Family Commitment: Display things like your children's artwork and family photos at work so that everyone can see how committed you are to family. Keep a scheduled family commitment just like you keep a work commitment. People will quickly learn to respect both your time at work and with family.

Use Work Benefits that Help You Balance Work and Family: Your employer might offer benefits like flextime, shift swapping, telecommuting, parental or paternity leave, or leave banks. Use them to help you with work and family time. If your employer doesn't have these benefits, talk with human resources about offering them.

Make Career Decisions as a Family: Try to find a job that limits stress when trying to balance work and family. As you consider new work or a promotion, compare the benefits of the job to how it will affect your family time.

Limit Work on Weekends, Vacations, and Holidays: Don't make a habit of working on your days off. You need time away from work to focus on family time. Have a co-worker cover your work during a vacation. This will keep you from worrying about it while you're gone.

Be With Your Family Every Day: Spend time every day with your children and mother of your children. Don't limit family time to the weekends. Find times and events that are just for family. Tuck your kids into bed, take an evening walk, or simply have dinner or breakfast together. Doing so will help you stay connected to your family. If you don't live with your children, try to spend as much time with them as you can. Find ways to talk with them every day over the phone, by email, and through texting.

Create "Family Prime Time": Create a daily block of time for family called "family prime time." Turn off your cell phone and laptop, and keep your work off-limits during this time.

Place Your Commitment in Writing: Create and sign a "family contract." Have your children and mother of your children sign it, too. Put in writing that you will balance success at work with success at home so that you can be an involved, responsible, and committed dad. Read this contract at the start of every week to remind you of this commitment.