

WHEN TWO CAREERS PLUS CHILDREN EQUALS STRESS

Nothing has had a bigger impact on families in recent years than wives and mothers moving into the work force and taking on careers. These women and their families are trying to find a working balance between the husband's career, the wife's career, and the needs of their children and marriage. How are they doing it? In the absence of guidelines for keeping this juggling act together, these families have created some strategies that they have found work for them. When asked by researchers how they coped with and reduced the stress brought on by dual-careers, this is what they said:

1. **DEFINE THE SITUATION.** If your careers are personally fulfilling and both husband and wife take pride in their accomplishments, then their improved attitude and feelings of self-worth are an asset to the family. By both husband and wife working, they are also raising their family's standard of living, which is in many cases preferable to the stress of the previous financial strain. Accept that there will be stress involved in two careers, but that it may be better than the stress of the wife not joining the work force.
2. **ESTABLISH PRIORITIES.** If you decide beforehand which of your roles is more important, then when a situation arises where the needs of family conflict with the needs of the career, it will be easier to make choices. The outline for making the decision is already in place; all that is needed is to implement it.
3. **COMPARTMENTALIZE WORK AND FAMILY ROLES:** You cannot be effective at work if your mind is on family problems and vice versa. Instead, concentrate on work when at work. Limit thoughts of children and spouse and contact them only when necessary so that family concerns do not interfere with your performance on the job. Leave your job at the work place; do not take papers and problems home with you. When you spend time with the family, be sure you are giving them all of your attention.
4. **COMPROMISE CAREERS.** Sometimes, to avoid situations detrimental to family life, both husbands and wives have to compromise career aspirations. A change of position that requires moving the family, a new job that requires a lot of time away from home, or a position that is too time and energy consuming sometimes has to be turned down in order to maintain family quality. It is a little unrealistic to think you can reach your highest career aspirations at the same time you are raising a family. Careers may have to be put on hold for awhile.
5. **REORGANIZE.** Many working women have found that delegating home responsibilities to husbands and children have eased the load. Even young children can take on simple chores like putting away clean laundry and dusting. The added advantage is that family members become more aware of the effort that goes into keeping house and can feel good about their contribution to it. The shared responsibility gives them more of an ownership in the family.
6. **GET ORGANIZED.** Women and men who are coping most successfully are those who adhere to organized schedules. Since time is limited, control over how it is spent is very important in attempting to meet the demands of time.
7. **STRENGTHEN THE MARRIAGE.** Strong, healthy marriage relationships are a major source of strength in coping with pressures. Relationships that include open communication, empathy, emotional reassurance, support, and sensitivity to each other's feelings make the role of each partner a therapeutic one for the other.
8. **BUY TIME.** Many working women use part of the money they earn to help relieve the overload. The most common types of hired help are child care, domestic work such as housecleaning and labor or time-saving devices like microwave ovens and dishwashers.

9. **ESTABLISH FRIENDSHIPS WITH COUPLES LIKE YOURSELVES.** Friends who have the same type of pressures with careers and concerns with families understand your problems and support your efforts. They have the same time limitations for friendships, yet the same needs, so they become a mutually helpful support system.
10. **NEGOTIATE WORK ARRANGEMENTS.** Some employers have found that modifying work schedules increases productivity by increasing the satisfaction and well-being of the employees. Flexible scheduling, part-time jobs, job sharing, and split-location employment (part of the work done in the home) provide employees with the time and means to be with their children when needed and still maintain a successful career.
11. Keeping the career and family juggling act together is never easy, but realizing you have limitations and trying to make use of these guidelines may help.