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**Working Parents: Trends and Tips**

Presentation by:  
MHN Training & Development

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## *Participant Handbook*

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## Program Objectives

- Review 'trends' in the structure of American families
- Discuss the idealized image of the "perfect" parent
- Present research on top child rearing practices
- Present tips for increasing ease, control and well-being

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## Parents – What's Your Experience?

What aspects of being a working parent do you find most rewarding?

What aspects do you find most challenging?

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## The Demands on Working Parents are Tremendous

*Wake up...*

- Feed your child(ren)
- Drop them at school
- Work
- Pick up your child(ren)
- Make dinner
- Eat dinner together
- Clean up
- Get your child to bed

**REPEAT...**

*And in between, tackle all 'to do' list items!*

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## The Truth

There's not enough time in a day to get *everything* done.

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### Family Structure Continues to Change...

- Two parent households are on the decline, as divorce, remarriage and cohabitation are on the rise.
- More children are being raised in single parent households.
- More moms are in the workforce.

% of all children living in a family with two married parents.	1960	2015
	73%	46%
% of single-parent households.	1960	2014
	9%	26%
% of all mothers (with children under 18) in the workforce.	1975	2015
	47%	70%

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### “Different is The New Normal”

*“There hasn’t been the collapse of one dominant family structure and the rise of another. It’s really a fanning out into all kinds of family structures.”*

- Philip Cohen, sociologist, University of Maryland

*“Different is the new normal.”*

Examples. Children (0 – 14 years):

- 7% live with a parent who cohabits with an unmarried partner.
- 11% live with mothers who have never been married.
- 4% with married parents where only the mother is employed.

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## Responsibilities at Home: Housework and Childcare

Fathers - # of hours spent on housework per week	1960's	2011
	4	10
Mothers - # of hours spent on housework per week	1960's	2011
	32	18
Fathers - # of hours spent with children per week	1965	2011
	2.5	7.3
Mothers - # of hours spent with children per week	1965	2011
	10.5	13.5

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## Balancing Work & Family – What Do Parents Say?

Among parents with children under age 18, half of working fathers and 56% of working mothers say that balancing the responsibilities of their job with the responsibilities of their family is very or somewhat difficult.

*-Pew Research Center, Washington D.C.*

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## The “Perfect” Parent

- Idealized image
- Impossible standards
- Leads to self-blame and guilt

Kids don’t need perfection!

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## Top Child-Rearing Practices

*According to research published in the Scientific American... the top 3 competencies or child-rearing practices were:*

1. **Love and Affection**
  - ❖ Supporting and accepting the child, being physically affectionate, and spending quality one-on-one time together.
2. **Stress Management**
  - ❖ Remaining calm, managing one’s own temper, taking steps to reduce stress for oneself and one’s child, promoting a positive interpretation of events, and practicing relaxation strategies.
3. **Relationship Skills** *(between the parents and with other people)*
  - ❖ Resolving conflicts out of sight of the children, apologizing to one another, forgiving each other, speaking kindly about one another, etc.

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### Quantity vs. Quality – *Children 3 – 11 years old*

- Sheer *amount of time* parents spend with their children has virtually no relationship to how children turn out (academic achievement, behavior and emotional well-being).
- *Quality* time is important. For ex: reading, sharing meals, talking together, engaging one-on-one.

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### Quantity vs. Quality – *Adolescents*

The more time a teen spends engaged with their mother... → the fewer instances of delinquent behavior.


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The more time teens spend with both parents... → the less likely they are to abuse drugs and alcohol and engage in other risky or illegal behavior. More likely to achieve higher math scores.

*The study found positive associations for teens who spent an average of six hours a week engaged in family time with parents.*

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## Tips For Working Parents

1. Take care of the basics
2. Use your time effectively
3. Get organized: leverage rules and routines
4. Plan, and plan again
5. Hold partner and family meetings
6. Leverage your resources!

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## #1 Take Care of the Basics

- Have reasonable expectations of yourself
- Know what you value (the most), and prioritize
- Get enough sleep
- Aim to reduce stress

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## #2 Use Your Time Effectively

Identify your “time wasters” and address them!

Examples:

- Attempting to do too much
- Ineffective planning
- Personal disorganization
- Lack of self-discipline...

*Handout B: “Timewasters & Action Steps Towards Change”*

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## #3 Get Organized: Leverage Rules and Routines

- Establish family rules/routines where they can be helpful
  - Putting “stuff” away, wake/bed time, technology use, study time, chores, curfew, etc.
- Get agreement and buy-in
- Identify consequences upfront
- Enforce rules

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## #4 Plan, and Plan Again

- Maintain a family calendar
  - Holidays, carpool details, activities, birthdays, chores, appointments
- Think and plan around food
  - Meal planning
  - Shopping
  - Food preparation (chop veggies, freeze leftovers, etc.)
- Schedule “me” time
- Schedule “we” time
- Schedule 1:1 time with children, and family time

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## #5 Hold Partner and Family Meetings

- Review the calendar, discuss issues, problem solve, role model respectful behavior, provide the opportunity to be heard, acknowledge efforts, practice listening.
- Plan meetings in advance (weekly or monthly)
- Establish rules
  - Everyone has a chance to speak
  - If you don't like something, say it in a respectful way (don't criticize)
  - Speak in a calm voice (don't yell)
  - Give one another a chance to finish an idea (don't interrupt)
- End on a positive note

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## #6 Leverage Your Resources

- Share the load; but don't micromanage
  - Teach your children to do chores
  - Change up shared workload with your partner, as needed
- Build up your support network
  - If you've said "no", consider why?
- Have childcare back-ups for your back-ups
- Look to other parents
- Who/what else?

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## Closing

- Be patient with yourself
- Admit being imperfect
- Look to humor

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## Resources

### Books

- Working Parents Thriving Families: 10 Strategies that Make a Difference by Dr. David J. Palmiter Jr.
- Overwhelmed: Work, Love, and Play When No One Has the Time by Brigid Schulte
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey
- Getting Things Done by David Allen
- The Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg

### Websites

- *Based upon your specific interest, the following websites provide recommendations for books on a variety of parenting topics:*
  - <http://www.parenting.com/blogs/mom-congress/melissa-taylor/10-best-books-thinking-parents>
  - <http://centerforparentingeducation.org/recommended-parenting-books/>
- [www.mhn.com](http://www.mhn.com)

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## Handout A: The Basics - Tips for Working Parents

### Section A.

**Have reasonable expectations of yourself.** If you consistently feel disappointed *most* days, because you don't accomplish many of the things that were on your to do list, then your expectations are most likely, unreasonable. This can mean living with daily frustration and disappointment; not a pleasant way to live.

**Know what you value (the most) and prioritize.** Routinely step back and ask yourself the “big picture” question, what's most important in my life right now, or another way to think about it, what do you value the most? Time with your children? Your work? Your partner? Something you love doing? When we do this regularly it can help us to prioritize our time and energy, provide focus, and ultimately, lead to greater satisfaction in our lives. As stated previously, *everything* can't get done, and certainly not to a level of perfection we might like. So tough decisions need to be made about where time and energy goes.

If you are a perfectionist... if you need to do *everything* “well”, ask yourself... Is there ever *good enough*? Often, the underlying need can never really satisfied, regardless of how much you accomplish. Again, come back to the question, what's most important and prioritize from there.

**Get enough sleep.** If you are sleep deprived, you truly cannot function at your best, and this comes into play with our ability to reason and make decisions, to have patience and so on. Not to mention it can take a toll on your physical health. What can you take off your list even for a time, to get enough sleep?

**Aim to reduce stress.** Are you using healthy strategies to help you manage your stress? And how often? Take time for yourself. Get out for walks. Take a warm bath. Gift yourself with doing absolutely nothing! Different strategies are useful for different people. What's important is to *use your strategies!*

## Section B.

### **Consider your expectations of yourself**

See if you can identify right now, one area in your life where you are chronically frustrated and/or disappointed. Write it down:

What expectations do you have of yourself in this area? Are they reasonable? *Note: would other people you talk to consider them to be reasonable?*

If your expectations are perhaps too high, how might you adjust them (keeping in mind what is in your control vs. what is not in your control)?

### **Identify what you value (the most) and prioritize**

Write down two or three things that come to mind; things that you currently value the most in your life.

These are the things that are important to *prioritize* in your life. Reflect on *how* you are prioritizing these things and if the degree of focus and attention you are able to give them is satisfactory. For example, if your relationship with your partner came up, how are you prioritizing that? Or if advancing in your career came up, how are you prioritizing that?

If you are not satisfied, are there things you can alter in order to give them more time and attention? (often it means letting other things go).

*Note: Sometimes we are unable to make major changes due to current circumstances. If that's the case, it's important to try and find the upside, or to find peace with things being the way they are (for now).*

## Handout B: Timewasters & Action Steps for Change

Take a moment to identify your timewasters, using the scale below.

1= Major timewaster; almost always

5 = Not a challenge; hardly ever

Timewaster	Your rating:				
1. Management by crisis	1	2	3	4	5
2. Telephone interruptions	1	2	3	4	5
3. Inadequate planning	1	2	3	4	5
4. Attempting too much	1	2	3	4	5
5. Drop-n visits	1	2	3	4	5
6. Ineffective delegation	1	2	3	4	5
7. Personal disorganization	1	2	3	4	5
8. Lack of self-discipline	1	2	3	4	5
9. Inability to say "no"	1	2	3	4	5
10. Procrastination	1	2	3	4	5
11. Leaving tasks unfinished	1	2	3	4	5
12. Inappropriate socializing	1	2	3	4	5
13. Confused responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
14. Poor communication	1	2	3	4	5
15. Incomplete information	1	2	3	4	5

List your major time wasters:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Are you ready to change timewasting habits?

Using the examples below, take one timewaster at a time and fill out each of the fields.

*Example #1:*

**Timewaster:** *Drop-in visits*

**Professional/Personal or both:** At work. my friends drop by my cubicle when they want to say hi or touch base.

**Impact:** I often get side-tracked from what I was working on and don't finish everything I'd set to complete that day.

**Action Steps:** Put up a sign that says I'm on task with something important.

**Anticipated Barriers:** They'll probably try to keep talking.

**Possible solution(s):** Let them know that I'm serious. That I really need to focus.

*Example #2:*

**Timewaster:** *Drop-in visits*

**Professional/Personal or both:** Personal. My dad stops in almost every evening when I'm trying to help the kids with homework.

**Impact:** We stay up about an hour later trying to get homework/kitchen clean up done.

**Action Steps:** Talk to my dad about coming on certain nights (Tue/Thur).

**Anticipated Barriers:** My dad will act/feel hurt, offended.

**Possible solution(s):** Let him know that I love him and want him over but that we've got to get more sleep.

*Your turn:*

**Timewaster:**

Professional/Personal or both:

Impact:

Action Steps:

Anticipated Barriers:

Possible solution(s):

---

**Timewaster:**

Professional/Personal or both:

Impact:

Action Steps:

Anticipated Barriers:

Possible solution(s):

---

**Timewaster:**

Professional/Personal or both:

Impact:

Action Steps:

Anticipated Barriers:

Possible solution(s):



## Handout C: Rules and Routines

### Examples of Rules and Consequences

Len and Mary's Rule with their 15 year old daughter Katiana.

**Rule** - Curfew is 10 pm.

**Consequence:** If Katiana arrives home later than 10:05 pm, and neither Len nor Mary received a text or call, then Katiana will lose social time "hanging out with friends" privileges for 1 week (7 days).

Len and Mary's rule with their 8 year old son Leonard.

**Rule** – When Leonard has been playing with his Lego's, they all must be put away in the Lego bin before he plays with something different.

**Consequence:** If Leonard starts playing with something before putting all Legos in his Lego bin, then Lego's will be off limits for 2 days.

### Identifying Useful Rules/Routines

What rules and/or routines might be beneficial for your family? Some ideas are listed below.

*Note: Or perhaps you have them already, but wish to make adjustments...*

#### Rules/agreements

- Clearly established bed times and wake up times
- Technology use\*
- Putting away "stuff"
- Making snacks/meals (clean up)
- Post family meal clean up
- Bathtub/shower use and clean up
- Putting toys away/bikes, etc.
- Study time (When? Where? Any restrictions – music/tv etc.)
- Curfew
- What else?

#### Routines for:

- Bed times
- Getting ready for school
- Getting ready for school with after school activity
- Weekend mornings
- Chores (daily)
- Chores (weekly)
- What else?

**What rules/routines would be helpful for your family? Write them below.**

**\*Technology** - Many parents are frustrated and concerned when it comes to how much time their kids spend with computer games, phones and other digital devices, and don't know what to do about it. What *can* be done, is to establish an agreement, or a contract, defining specifically, what is allowed, and consequences, if the agreement is broken. The website, Screenagersmovie.com provides insight on this topic and ideas for developing an agreement with your teen. Go to their "resources" tab.

### **Suggestions For Setting Up A "New" Routine**

Naturally, if your child is expected to start following a new routine, they may need reminders and some support in the beginning. Using consequences too early will discourage a child and defeat the purpose. Instead, try using words of encouragement and positive reinforcers for their efforts and progress.

*For example.*

Say you have had it with your 10 year old son Tobias, getting to bed too late, so you are wanting to implement a bed time routine.

Together, you come up with a rule of bed-time at 8:30 and a routine to support that.

**Rule:**

Bed-time (lights out) at 8:30 pm

**Routine:**

7:00 pm – get back pack ready for next day

7:15 pm – clean up room (clothes, toys etc. put away)

7:45 pm – brush teeth and get pj's on

8:00 pm – read

8:30 pm – lights out

**What does Tobias need to do this:**

“To put the routine up on my wall where I can see it”.

“A clock in my bedroom”.

“Some help remembering to start at 7:00”.