



by Karen Stephens

Tips for Keeping Family Life Balanced

In today's whirlwind world, it's really hard to maintain balance in family life. So many outside forces make demands on our time and energy — work, children's schooling and more out-of-home entertainment opportunities than any other time in history.

No parent says that his or her goal in life is to feel *burned out*. No one sets out to allow the pace of family life to spin out of control. No parent likes feeling overwhelmed and pushed to the breaking point day in and day out. And parents don't like knowing their kids feel that way, either. But it happens, even without our permission; home life gets out of whack.

The parents I know hope to create a balanced home life. They want a home atmosphere that allows family members to feel relaxed, content, and as stress-free as possible, especially the kids.

To a person, they hope family members can float through life on an even keel; each feeling safe, appreciated, engaged and fulfilled. But hoping for such a home life doesn't make it come true. Hoping alone is never enough to achieve any worthy goal. We parents must put action behind our hopes and dreams if they are to come true.

Parents trying to keep family life smooth sailing have quite a challenge before them. So today I share specific ways to bring balance into your life. Trust me, you'll forget to apply the tips from time to time. Life just works that way. It becomes a flurry of activity, and before you know it, you lose your grip on your time and schedules.

But when you begin to feel too stressed out, too tired, or too overwhelmed, refer back to the tips. It takes practice and persistence to maintain calm and balance; but it can be done. Your kids are counting on you to lead the way.

Tips for Maintaining Balance

1. Take time to reflect on the type of person you want to be — the kind of parent you want to be. Reflect on what you really want to give to life as well as what you want to get out of it.
2. Determine what you want your life to stand for. Identify your core values and beliefs. Then plan specific ways your life can mirror these beliefs.
3. If you have trouble deciding what you want your life to stand for, or if you have trouble planning how you want to spend your time in life, try this mental exercise. Upon your death, what you would want your own parents, your spouse or partner, or children to be able to *truthfully* say about you? Let that lead you.
4. Once you have an idea of what you want your life to be like, write down specific goals. Then prioritize your goals, ranging from short, to intermediate, to long term.
5. Set lofty goals and believe you can do it all. Life really should be a grand adventure. However, for your own sanity and energy level, remember, *you can do it all, but not all at once*. Your fundamental beliefs and values identified in #3 will help you prioritize your goals. Some goals can be achieved even when actively parenting, others need to wait until the kids are older. Others may need to wait for retirement. *Have patience*. Have *trust* that your dreams will come true in their own good time.

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