

“WE CAN’T CONTROL THE WORLD AROUND US [OR] THE CHAOS THAT ENSUES IN PARENTHOOD AND WORK... THE ONLY THING WE CAN CONTROL IS OURSELVES.”



# No Place Like Home

WORK PRESSURES ARE HARD ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH. IF FAMILIAL RESPONSIBILITIES ARE ADDING TO THE CHAOS, TRY THESE 5 TIPS TO REINTRODUCE HARMONY INTO THE HOME.

BY **KELSEY OGLETREE**

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**W**hen publicist Kari Torstenson and her husband decided they were ready to start a family, she wasn’t sure if she could stay in her career. The nine-to-five lifestyle of commuting to an office, managing a team and maintaining a busy calendar filled with client projects wasn’t going to be sustainable once she became a mom, or so she thought.

Growing up a millennial, she never witnessed more than two options for mothers. “You either worked and your kid went to day care all day... or [you were] a stay-at-home mom... I never really saw anything in between,” she says. Early in her first pregnancy, Torstenson decided to figure out a new path.

She reconnected with a friend with whom she’d worked as an intern in her early 20s who offered her a contract role. Her pay would be influenced by the number of clients she helped to bring on, and she wouldn’t have an official maternity leave, which made the move risky, but she’d be able to work from home and control her own hours.

“It didn’t take me long to make the decision,” Torstenson says. At five months pregnant, she left her agency job and took the leap in search of a role that honored the lifestyle she wanted rather than the other way around.

Since then, she’s had two more children, ages 5 and 2, and will welcome her fourth child this spring. With each new baby and new season, she’s stayed in her current role, but her workload and day structure have evolved. Her oldest child is now in elementary school, and she also has a babysitter to help out on some afternoons.

She often heads out to a coffee shop to work once the babysitter arrives or wakes up before the kids to draft emails early in the day. It’s not easy, and a lot of days feel messy, but it’s been worth it to grow her family and continue to elevate her career as a publicist.

“Ultimately, your personal life as a mom and as a partner alongside your professional growth really go hand in hand,” Torstenson says. “If you kind of align the two, you can grow the two at the same time—but it doesn’t mean that they’re growing at the same speed.”

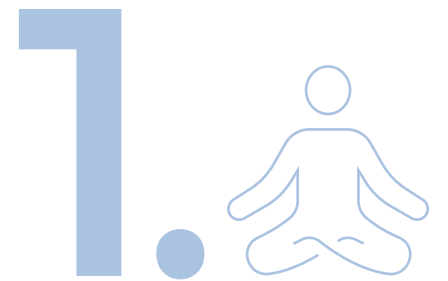
Whether you’re in a family where both parents work at home or in an office, or one is a full-time caregiver,

balancing your professional and personal responsibilities is a never-ending juggling act.

Heading into the busy holiday season, navigating demanding jobs and children can feel especially challenging. Reframing situations and having important discussions can help you create more harmony between the two.

Jess Ringgenberg, Dallas-based founder and CEO of Elixir Coaching & Consulting, certified life coach and mother of two, is one of many working parents to realize that work-life balance “doesn’t exist,” and the relentless pursuit of perfection perpetuates a gap between living and thriving. “We can’t control the world around us [or] the chaos that ensues in parenthood and work... The only thing we can control is ourselves,” she says.

Here are five tips to help you achieve more balance while juggling the responsibilities of work and home life:



## CARVE OUT TIME FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

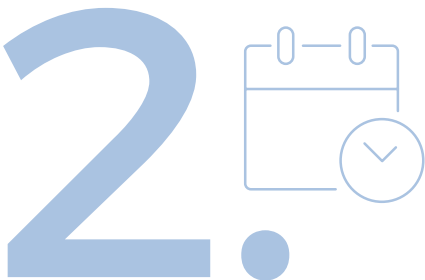
When you’re facing extra challenges during this season, from big fourth-quarter deadlines to seasonal illness to holiday festivities, inject micromoments of mindfulness into your day.

Before you even get out of bed in the morning, close your eyes and ask yourself a few questions: Who do I want to be today? What do I want to give? What do I want to receive? Who do I need to ask for help?

## HAVING THE MINDSET THAT YOU MUST ALWAYS BE GREAT AT WORK AND GREAT AT HOME ONLY LEADS TO GUILT AND BURNOUT—TWO FEELINGS THAT DON'T SERVE US WELL.

This simple move sets the tone for your day, helps you take a pulse check of yourself and allows you to focus on prevention—to prevent the breakdown, the overwhelm, the depression, the anxiety, Ringgenberg explains.

A micromoment for yourself could also look like going outside to put your face in the sun, putting on a meditation app for 30 seconds, taking a 15-minute walk or even heading into the garage to scream for a minute, she adds.



### SHARE A CALENDAR AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Whether one or both parents are working, create a family calendar to keep up with all work and family events. This enables you to take control of your workload and evaluate where you might need to ask for help from your village, Ringgenberg says.

It can be helpful for both partners to sit down on Sunday evenings to review the week ahead. If one person has a busy day, you can rely on the other to have more flexibility as a parent.

You can also take steps to ensure this shared responsibility, such as calling your child's school to ensure they'll notify both parents in case of a sickness or another issue. Society tends to look at mothers as the predominant caregiver, Ringgenberg says, so let your child's school know that they should call both parents if needed.



### GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

Having the mindset that you must always be great at work and great at home only leads to guilt and burnout—two feelings that don't serve us well, Ringgenberg shares.

She stresses that mothers tend to feel these sentiments especially deeply and challenges moms to reframe their situations.

If you didn't pick up a call from your child's school or day care because you were in a meeting, for instance, you didn't do anything wrong. Your partner is also capable of picking up the phone and meeting your child's needs.

"You're allowed to challenge those thoughts and find one that's more supportive of you," Ringgenberg says.



### COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

In relationships, we often want people to read our minds, which leads to assumptions. Tracking everything in a household tit for tat easily leads to resentment issues, which create a poor environment for both work and home life.

You can get ahead of this by having clear conversations with your partner that are focused on what Ringgenberg calls "resolution outcomes."

For example, say you share a home working space with your partner who

doesn't keep their desk tidy. Instead of complaining, you could say, "It's hard for me to focus when your desk is a mess. What can we do together so that I can have the environment I need to concentrate?" This type of conversation includes a why, a clear outcome and a resolution without assumptions, she adds.

Having conversations before the busyness of the week sets in is also smart. If one partner knows Wednesday is going to be packed for them, they can ask for support from the other to help with pickup and making dinner or whatever tasks need taking care of at home.



### ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF

Stay-at-home moms or dads tend to be self-sacrificing because they're not bringing monetary value to the family and may feel guilty taking time for themselves. But being the full-time caregiver is work, and is difficult, a fact that needs to be acknowledged by both partners.

Communication is paramount. Discuss what each partner is agreeing to in their respective roles and what each person needs. For example, a stay-at-home mom might agree to grocery shop, cook dinner each evening and keep the home clean and need to go to the gym for an hour three times a week.

If both partners' needs and responsibilities are carved out and planned for ahead of time, there's no need for guilt or resentment, Ringgenberg says. "Nobody needs to sacrifice. You don't need to lose yourself in your job, and you don't need to lose yourself as a stay-at-home mom." ♦

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