



# Combining Work and Family

## *How to Make It Work*

If you're like most working parents, you juggle child care arrangements and concerns about your aging parents' capabilities with job worries and the evening's dinner menu. Your employer depends on you to be organized and efficient. Your family needs you to be nurturing and compassionate. You wear many different hats each day and you need every available resource to help you succeed.

What's available to help you manage these multiple roles? Your primary resources are within you. Of key importance is the value you place on family communication and the care you extend in nurturing your relationships with your spouse and children. Also important is your ability to make plans and prioritize your time. But most working adults need outside help to balance work and family obligations. Fortunately, many employers realize that their workforce is composed of people just like you. Most companies have special resources to connect you with services to assist you in managing your responsibilities.

Here are some ideas to keep in mind as you try to fit work and family responsibilities into a busy, but satisfying life:

### **CONNECT WITH YOUR FAMILY.**

Make time for togetherness. Make sure your spouse and children know that their needs are important despite your busy schedule. Take time to enhance your parenting skills and learn how to communicate with your children. Private time with your spouse should take high priority when you plan your time.

### **ORGANIZE AND PRIORITIZE YOUR LIFE.**

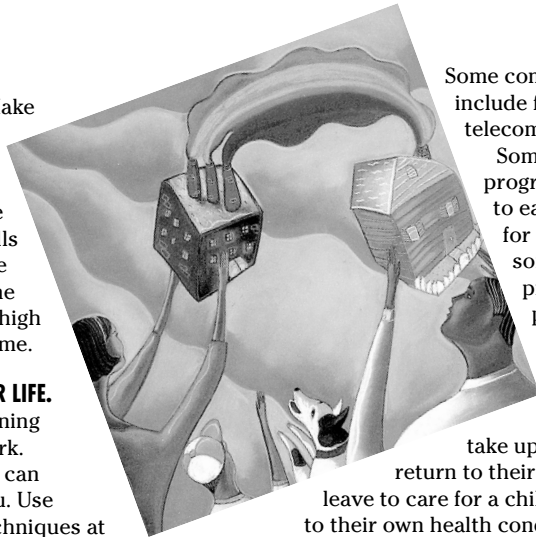
Learn and use long-range planning techniques at home and at work. Organize your household so it can function smoothly without you. Use effective time management techniques at work that streamline your job and reduce stress.

### **USE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES.**

You can find out about child care and elder care services in your community through local agencies and resource centers. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) frequently has information about these services. Your EAP also may be a good resource for books and videos about parenting and referrals to a wide variety of counseling services.

### **INVESTIGATE EMPLOYER-SPONSORED BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS.**

Your organization may offer the option of working a schedule other than the traditional 9-to-5 work week.



Some common alternative work options include flextime, job sharing and telecommuting.

Some employers offer benefit programs that give an employee a way to ease the financial stress of caring for an elderly relative. For instance, some programs are set up to deduct pretax dollars from an employee's paycheck and earmark the fund for dependent care expenses.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) guarantees eligible employees the right to take up to 12 weeks of medical leave and return to their jobs. Employees may use FMLA leave to care for a child, a spouse or a parent or to tend to their own health conditions.

### **ENJOY YOUR LEISURE TIME.**

Plan and enjoy relaxing activities with your spouse and family. Try to save some time for yourself. Establish a regular exercise routine (at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week) and find other ways to enjoy personal time.

### **LET GO OF PERFECTION.**

Realize that it's impossible to be a perfect parent, whether you work away from home all day or stay at home. Your ability to provide love, constructive discipline and guidance is the most important gift you can give your children. With good planning, organization and knowledge of how to balance work and family responsibilities, you can make it all work for you and your family.