



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OF THE PACIFIC, LLC

# 5 Tips for Working From Home Stress-Free (Parent's Edition)

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When I started my home-based stress management business, my wife was still working outside the home and we had a brand-new baby boy. We didn't really have money for childcare, so I watched after him while starting my business. By the time baby #3 came along I had learned a lot about taking care of kids and running a business at the same time. Now with the pandemic forcing a lot of parents with young children to work from home and care for their kids at the same time, I thought it would be helpful to share some of what I've learned over the years.

**1. Delegate and/or share the burden.** For some reason, kids today don't seem to do as much work around the house as they did in days gone by. Yes, they have a lot of homework, but you and they will feel better in the long run if you let them share the burden of certain household chores. Figure out what chores can be assigned to your kids at what age and let them do those duties without any help from you. Picking up toys, hanging up clothes, making their beds, even doing their own laundry (when they are a little older) are all good places to start. Once you firmly establish these chores as routine, your life will be easier, and their lives will be fuller. Remember, don't make them (necessarily) do it your way. That's not delegating. As long as *their* results match *your* expectations, let them do it any way they want to.

**2. Embrace the interruptions.** I used to get all bent out of shape, when my wife – who transitioned to being a full time mom once baby #3 came along – would interrupt me with a plumbing problem or some “emergency” that needed fixing right away. I'd get annoyed and tell her: “If I wasn't working from home, you'd either call a contractor or figure out how to fix it yourself.”

After a couple of years of having this as a recurring source of conflict, I finally realized, if I wasn't in the middle of something important I'd take (an often much-needed) [break](#) and do whatever she wanted me to do. (And this was often the equivalent to getting up from your desk and walking around for five minutes every hour.) Also, when the kids came into my work space to share some accomplishment they were excited about, unless I was on the phone (and they learned fairly early on not to interrupt me when I was in an online meeting or on the phone) I'd embrace that interruption too. It was silly to spend any time being annoyed by interruptions. After all, I probably would have had even more interruptions if I had been working in an office setting with other employees all around me.

**3. Don't miss dinner.** Missing dinner is an easy place to lose your footing as a family. It's so tempting to skip it when the work piles up or check your phone a dozen times during dinner itself, or come late to dinner when your food is cold and everyone else is about to leave the table. For me, my workday always stops at dinner time, whenever that is. While our routines have changed dramatically over the years, when the kids were little dinner, play time, baths, reading before bed, putting the kids to bed: These were all precious moments that for the most part, I never missed.

**4. Every day of the pandemic could be: Take your child to work day.**

When your children are very young, they desperately want to imitate everything you do and I think we would be wise as parents to take advantage of this innate tendency. That's why I always invited my kids to work beside me whenever that was possible. I remember how my older daughter, before she could write a single letter of the alphabet, would go to the bank with me, and fill out a bank deposit slip, just like I did, by putting little hash marks (which was her imitating me writing) on the slip in all the blank places.

So just by letting my kids tag along on certain errands – like going to Staples – and even visiting an understanding client or two, where I just had to stop in to deliver something or pick something up, they had a learning experience. My kids ultimately went to a charter school where the mission statement for the school was that children should: “learn by doing.” Every moment the kids and I spent working together, was definitely a learning experience for them. Sure there were interruptions but it was worth it to be able to teach them in that way. My older daughter is 25 now and still one of her FAVORITE activities is going to Staples and buying office supplies!

**5. Practice gratefulness.** You are one of the very fortunate people who HAS kids and gets to work from home and watch your kids grow up. As a result, you won't miss a thing: First words, first steps, first birthday, etc. Sure, it would be nice if you didn't have to supervise them quite so much but getting frustrated about them being home all the time isn't going to make your life or their lives any easier. Before you go to sleep at night, repeat silently to yourself five things you have to be grateful for, including all the time you got to spend with your kids that day. I predict, that at some point those of us who didn't suffer major losses during this pandemic will look back on this unique period with fond memories of a time where we spent more time talking, being together, living simply and hopefully being grateful for everything that happened, *just the way that it happened.*

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