Balancing Responsibilities

Do you ever feel as if you are trying to juggle too many items at the same time? Do you care for your kids, go to work, attend school activities, take care of aging parents, help with social events, attend meetings, maintain the car, keep up with the house or apartment, do the shopping, fix the meals and...? The list goes on and on. And when is there time in the day to take care of you?

Many studies show that families have trouble managing work, family and community responsibilities. Creating a balance helps family members find time to nurture, support and enjoy each other.

It is physically impossible to do everything and to be everywhere. What can you do to help find balance?

Prioritize
Take a look at what is really important to you. In two to three minutes, brainstorm a list of all the things you think you should do. It may be helpful to write them down. For example:

- I should spend more time with my children.
- I should take better care of my house.
- I should walk more.

Now go back and number the items on your list. Make number 1 the most important. Look at your “shoulds.”

- Are they positive? Or negative?
- What is the most important thing?
- What is the least important?
- What can you do to make the most important things happen?
- What can you do to let go of the least important ones?

Communicate
Communicating is more than talking. It involves understanding, listening and sharing information. Sometimes when we are overwhelmed, we forget to let others know what is going on.

If you come home and your teenagers have not cleaned the kitchen, don’t yell, “I told you to clean up. Why don’t you ever do what you’re supposed to do?” Instead, say, “I’ve had a really long day. I need your help, and when you don’t follow through, I feel like you’re being disrespectful to me and to the family. What happened? What can we do to fix this?”

Delegate
When you delegate, you give some of your work to others. You can lighten your load, while others can learn new things.

Many of us have a hard time asking for help because we feel like no can do the job as well as we can. Or, we may feel guilty asking for help. Remember, one person cannot do it all.

1. Learn to let go.
2. Delegate, but don’t stick others with jobs you don’t like.
3. Ask for what you need.
4. Involve others.
5. Support others and be positive.
6. Let others succeed.
7. Accept the way that other people do things.
8. Show that you appreciate others.

**Negotiate**

When you negotiate, you work to create a win-win situation. No one should feel as if she has lost or that he has given up too much of what was important to her or him.

1. Communicate clearly.
2. Respect the other person.
3. Define the problem clearly.
4. Look for solutions from many places.
5. Try for win-win solutions.
6. Work together until you can agree.
7. Do what you say you will do.
8. Keep up a good relationship.

For example, the kids are supposed to make their beds every day, but they don't. You get mad because you feel like you have to do everything and the kids don't listen. What can you do?

- Sit down at a time when you are not angry. Tell the kids that you are upset that they don't make their beds and that they are supposed to. Listen to their side. *Really* listen — let them talk and do not make any judgments. Maybe you will find out the kids don't have time in the mornings. Or that they hate to do it.
- How can changes be made? Could the kids make their beds after school? Could you all agree that the kids will make their beds in the mornings, and in return, they don't have to make the beds on the weekend? Work together to find ideas.
- What would help? Do you all need to switch chores? Maybe the kids could vacuum and you could make the beds for a week. It is important that you decide as a family.

Decide what is important, talk with others, share the load, and be flexible to help balance your life!