

## IMPROVING YOUR WORK/LIFE BALANCE AS A NEW DAD



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Balancing your work commitments and family life is now harder for dads than ever before. Research shows that most men continue to work just as many hours after they have kids. Yet on top of that, studies also reveal that fathers now do three times as much childcare and twice as much housework as dads did back in the 1960s.

In order to survive and thrive, you need to find a way to manage these competing responsibilities. Some of these ideas may help make life a little easier.

### 1. LEARN TO SWITCH GEARS

It's often hard not to bring work stress home with you. The problem is that anxiety can affect the whole family.

In order to park your stress at the end of the working day, it can help to find a personal routine to shift your headspace into dad mode. A transition ritual between work and home can help.

Your switch-off routine could involve listening to a podcast on your commute, stopping off at the gym or simply getting out of your work clothes and having a shower when you return home. Do it regularly and train your brain that you're mentally clocking off from work.

### 2. LEARN TO LOG OFF

The avalanche of work emails never stops. But while logging on after hours might keep your boss happy, it's not helpful for your personal wellbeing. A recent study from Virginia Tech found that workers who responded to emails after hours had higher levels of anxiety and dissatisfaction (<https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2018/08/pamplin-employer-emailexpectations.html>).

Set boundaries and protect your downtime. You could consider making a rule not to check emails after a certain time each night. You could turn off your email notifications and set up an automatic response to any emails sent after 6pm saying that you'll respond to them as soon as possible the next day.

If you are able to establish some parameters it might help with becoming more present or less distracted when you are with your children.

### 3. TALK IT OVER

A recent report from the Australian Institute of Family Studies shows that only one in three dads works flexible hours. Talk to your employer about what's on offer and keep them informed of your family situation.

Speak to your boss or HR manager to find out about your organisation's parental leave and flexible work policies. Maybe you can work from home one day a week or tweak your shifts to get away earlier? The government also has a range of resources (<https://supportingworkingparents.humanrights.gov.au/>) designed to support you at this stage of life.

### 4. ORGANISE REINFORCEMENTS

Sadly, work doesn't slow down just because you've had a baby. Whether it's the deadline for a big project or you're trying to win a vital deal, there'll inevitably be times when your job's intensity cranks up. That's unavoidable but you can take active steps to limit the fallout with your family. If you know you've got a heavy period of work ahead, take the initiative to organise some extra help for your partner.

Perhaps you could line up a food delivery service for that week? Or call upon your family or friends to step in as an extra pair of hands? You're not expected to do everything yourself.

### 5. ANTICIPATE THE CHAOS

Early fatherhood is incredibly demanding in terms of both your time and energy. You are more likely to be physically and mentally stretched so, if possible, don't overload yourself with extra responsibilities.

It might be worth considering if this is the right time to take on extra projects if you have a choice or maybe just keep things more simple as you ease into parenthood. It is hard to work all this out, so just be easy on yourself during this huge time of adjustment.

Be realistic with yourself about how you want this time to look and feel. Fatherhood is a marathon not a sprint – pace yourself accordingly. 🌸

