

Balancing Work, Family and Caregiving Responsibilities

Managing multiple roles and responsibilities can be challenging. If you are providing caregiving services to an elder or family member while also working and supporting your family, it is understandable to feel stressed. Consider the following information to help you successfully balance your various roles and responsibilities without experiencing burnout.

Learn Your Company's Policies

It is important to become familiar with the policies your company has in place for absences and leave. Your employer may also have other suggestions to help you manage your time better.

Meet with Your Manager

If you are feeling overwhelmed, schedule a short appointment with your manager to talk to him or her about your situation. With his or her permission, you may be able to have a flextime work arrangement. Flextime is a variable work schedule instead of a traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule. Moving around your work hours may help you better fulfill your caregiving and family responsibilities.

If your job is one that only requires a computer and phone, ask your manager if it is possible to work from home on some days. Working from home allows you to be closer to the individual you are caring for or your children in the event that there is an emergency. However, if you feel that working from home may be distracting, avoid this option. You want to make sure that your quality of work does not suffer.

Talk to Human Resources

If you feel that you need more time to adequately fulfill your family and caregiving responsibilities, talk to your human resources department. Ask them about The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the FMLA allows eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specific family and medical reasons. If you are eligible and your employer is covered, you can work with human resources to go on leave for up to 12 weeks during a 12-month period. This will allow you to focus on your caregiving and family-related responsibilities for some time.

Avoid Mixing Professional and Personal Responsibilities

When you are in the workplace, try to restrict your focus to work-related tasks only. Avoid taking many breaks for personal phone calls or completing non-work related tasks on your computer. Mixing your work with other responsibilities can cause your performance to decline and your co-workers and manager to become frustrated.

Similarly, when you are at home, avoid worrying about work. Try your best to give your undivided attention to your family members and caregiving responsibilities. Focusing on work at home may cause your family to become upset or feel neglected.

Plan Ahead

Take some time to create a plan to help you stay on top of your various responsibilities and tasks.

Create a Schedule

If you prefer to access your schedule electronically, consider using the calendar on your phone or computer. If you prefer having a physical copy with you at all times, consider using a notebook or planner.

Block off time for each task you have to complete. Depending on your tasks, you may be able to have a set routine for certain days of the week. For example, you can have one schedule for Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, one for Tuesdays and Thursdays and one for the weekend. However, if your tasks vary significantly from day-to-day, a different schedule for each day may work best. Remember to factor in recurring tasks like meals, grocery shopping, laundry, etc.

Try your best to stick to the schedule you create. If you feel comfortable, share the schedule with your family members and close friends. This way, they know when they can spend time with you and when you are busy with other tasks.

Be Honest

Be honest with yourself when planning out each day. You may think you can fit many tasks into one day, but you must factor in your own needs as well. Balancing work, caregiving and family-related tasks can be exhausting. Remember to set aside some time to relax and recuperate each day.

It is also important to be honest about your schedule with your manager, family members and the individual whom you are caring for. You may want to accept extra projects and responsibilities from your manager or tell your family that you are available for them at any time. However, if you know that these things are not possible, make sure they know that. It is better to be honest rather than risk letting others down, as this can result in mutual frustration.

Seek Outside Help

Do not hesitate to seek help from others. As stated previously, you can always reach out to your manager and human resources department if you are having difficulties balancing work with other responsibilities.

Similarly, if you know that you are unable to adequately fulfill all of your caregiving responsibilities, look into caregiving services to help you out. It is much better to ask for help rather than letting the quality of your care decline.

Finally, if you (and your spouse, if you are married) are struggling to provide for your young children, consider nanny, babysitting or daycare services. If your close friends or relatives are available at times when you are not, consider asking them for help with taking care of your children. If your children are older, take some time to sit down and have an open discussion about how you can best be there for them. Try your best to incorporate these ideas and feedback into your daily schedule.

Resources

- Eldercare Locator: <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx>
- Office of Child Care: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ
- Office of Personnel Management – Flexible Work Schedules: www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/work-schedules/fact-sheets/alternative-flexible-work-schedules/
- United States Department of Labor – FMLA: www.dol.gov/general/topic/benefits-leave/fmla
- USA.gov – Child Care: www.usa.gov/child-care

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