

# Parenting the Preschooler

---

 **Working for Wisconsin Families**

Joan E. LeFebvre  
Area Family Living Agent  
University of Wisconsin-Extension  
Vilas, Forest, Florence Counties

---

## Work and Family

Are you frustrated by lack of time to do the things you need and want to do? Managing a household, working, and finding time for family activities is not easy for working parents. Successfully balancing time for family and work will bring you and your family many benefits.

### Avoid the Rush Before Work

If you are frazzled when you finally arrive at work or your attitude at work is affected by the chaos at your house, consider these suggestions for avoiding the rush before work.

- ★ If you work days, remember that mornings are a time management challenge.
  - Try to go to bed earlier, after a week or so it will be easier to get up in the morning.
  - Allow yourself enough time in the mornings.
  - Try not to use the snooze button.
- ★ Place items for work and child care in one familiar place.
  - It may be a good idea to place keys, work bag, purse, school supplies, child care supplies and letters to be mailed near the door.
  - Keep some change handy for those unexpected small expenses.
- ★ Have all the family members' clothing ready for the next day ahead of time.
  - Wash work uniforms when you get home.
- Gain time before work to do other things.
- Avoid last minute rush.
- Have children help decide on clothing the night before as part of their bedtime routine.
- ★ Rise first and dress before waking others (or before children return home from school). Time alone without interruption can help to get yourself together.
- ★ Make lunches ahead of time.
- ★ Take time to eat.
  - Take time to eat breakfast (or dinner). If you're on the run, grab something to eat on the way.
  - Set the table the night before.
  - Arrange with child care provider to have children fed.
  - Make breakfast bars or other take-along food.
- ★ Set clocks ahead 5 or 10 minutes. Having clocks and watches set ahead may help keep you on schedule.
- ★ Reward yourself for arriving at work on time. Give yourself credit and treat yourself - you are ready to work.
- ★ Encourage preschooler to take special blanket, toy, stuffed animal to help with separation anxiety at child care provider.

## Coming Home: Making the Transition

Transitions are times of change. Often during these times our bodies are at the right place at the right time, but our minds are not. Our minds have not made the transition yet and are still trying to catch up.

### **When families reassemble at home, anything can happen. Here are a few of the demands that families are facing:**

- ★ The family is hungry. It has been 5 to 6 hours since the last meal.
- ★ Family members may vent their frustrations after a particularly frustrating day. It is safe to fall apart at home.
- ★ Household tasks need to be done--open mail, change clothes, start dinner, or throw in a load of wash.
- ★ Children want your time and attention.

As your family returns home, everyone has a special need that should be met. These needs often lead families down a collision course that leads to increased stress and emotional outbreaks. It is important to negotiate these delicate day-to-day demands and not get knocked down in the struggle. The challenge is to make it through the collision course with as little damage as possible.

The more time you have to make transitions, the easier it will be. A hurried transition is always hard. Think of the times that you're late to pick up the children or meet another family obligation. You are upset, you are angry, and you are under stress to hurry, hurry, hurry and get it done. When other family members know that you are under stress, they may become irritated, too.

Making a smooth transition from work to home will help to give you more time and energy at home. Here are some tips.

## Transition Tips

- ★ Leave thoughts of work at work.
  - Straighten up your work area before you leave.
  - Say good-bye to work for the day.
  - Tell yourself: "I did a good job today!"
- ★ Use the drive from work to home to make the transition easier.
  - Finish thinking about work, and then shift gears and think about what needs to be done at home.
  - Make a list of the things that need to be done at home.
  - Listen to music and sing along.
  - Breathe deeply and relax.
  - If time allows, routinely complete one small 10 minute errand before returning home.
- ★ When you arrive home, shift into family mode. For example, change your clothes-put on a comfortable shirt, pants, or slippers. (A different set of clothes can make you feel like you're finally home.)
- ★ Spend a few minutes visiting with your children about their day.
  - By setting up a routine, children will know that they have your attention for about 10 to 15 minutes before beginning tasks.
  - The best time to talk with your preschooler may be in the car on the way home.
- ★ Have an easy quick snack before you begin making a meal. For example, give your children a plate of crackers and peanut butter.
- ★ Involve your preschooler in household tasks such as mealtime preparation. Chores done together build positive relationships.

### *Sources:*

*Balancing Work and Family.* Iowa State University Extension. "Avoid the Morning Rush" Nov. 1994, and "Coming Home: Making the Transition" June 1995.

*When You Work Curriculum Source book.* UW Extension. 1996.

Author: Joan E. LeFebvre, Professor, Department of Family Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension  
Reviewer: Carolyn Krueger, Extension Specialist Assistant, Family Resource Management, UW-Extension

For more information on Parenting and Child Development, contact: JOAN E. LEFEBVRE, Area Family Living Agent, University of Wisconsin-Extension, P O Box 369, Courthouse, Eagle River WI 54521, 715-479-3653, FAX 715-479-3605, E-Mail joan.lefebvre@ces.uwex.edu  
September, 1997