

Time Management With Kids

‘What we need,’ said Dumbledore slowly, and his light-blue eyes moved from Harry to Hermione, ‘is more time.’

~ Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

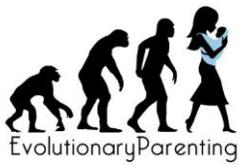
Days at home with children – whether every day or just weekends – often lead to a period at the end of the day where you wondered what has happened with time. Where did it go? Without a time-turner, we are left at the end of the day feeling a little down, confused, and possibly stressed-out about all the things that didn’t get done in that time. We woke up when we planned and we’re now sitting there hours later and yet all those plans just... disappeared.

Unless you run your house like the military, I doubt anyone hasn’t experienced this at least once. For people who work from home, they may experience it daily. For those who work out of the house and rely on weekends to get a lot done, they may feel this way each and every weekend day. Mixed in with this is often a concern about the time we did spend. Did we spend it wisely? If we didn’t get all we wanted done, what did we do?

I want here to offer a few steps for helping you cope with time management and children. Somehow in all the books on time management I’ve read there seems to be no acknowledgment that once you have kids all those nice plans go out the window never to be seen until your kids are older. However, there are things that do get in the way of us planning our time and thus being realistic with our time. Like our children’s sleep, it is very easy to have expectations that just don’t mirror life with kids and when we fail to live up to them, we can feel down and dejected which puts a negative hue on everything else we do.

Let’s start with some of the mistakes we make and how to avoid them:

- 1) Take a look at the planned activities in your days and compare how much time you’ve allotted for them versus how much time they actually take. For example, I have in the calendar that my kids have gymnastics on Wednesdays. The boy’s class runs from 11-12 and the girl’s from 12-1:30. Mentally, I can be prone to think of gymnastics as being 2.5 hours. But I also have to factor in that we have to pick up her friend (and drop her back off) and gym is rather far away so have to leave the house by 10:15 if we’re going to be there on time and, after we get lunch for the kids, we aren’t home until somewhere around 3pm. This is much longer than the original timing and can wreck havoc on your schedules if you aren’t accounting for travel time.
- 2) Make sure you consider “getting ready” time. If you remember that great comedy bit that did the rounds a while ago about a man trying to leave the house with and without kids (you can see it here if



you don't know what I'm talking about: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFQfyIQ2Jgg>), you know that kids aren't magically ready when you need to leave. This means you need to also account for getting ready time and getting back in time for every event where you leave the house. In many cases this can top 30 minutes before going and at least 15 min once you get back. If you're doing that a couple times a day, that's 1.5 hours that you haven't been thinking about. (Add an extra 10 minutes if you have a kid still in diapers who will likely decide to go right before leaving!)

3) Remember kids add time to errands. One thing parents often forget (even seasoned parents) is that when you run an errand with a child, you should probably double the time you planned for it if you actually plan on making it through without losing your mind. The thing is – kids love doing errands with us and it can actually be great bonding time with them if you can step back and allow for the added time it will take. Grocery shopping is wonderful when kids help pick things out, but this is only fun if you make sure to not feel rushed the whole time.

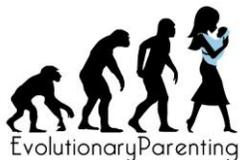
4) Know your kids and the kind of time they need. Kids have needs and we centre in a lot of their needs. Some kids are happy to have time with us when we are ready and able, others not so much. If you have a child that needs regular contact throughout the day then make sure you have smaller chunks where you can provide this because they will demand this if they can (rightfully so!). If your kid needs a long stretch with you, plan that so that you know you've given to them what they need in the amount of time they need it. But if you aren't planning around your child's needs, your child won't be happy and neither will you.

In addition to this, we also need to consider how we frame what did happen. If you're like me, you probably get stuck focusing on all the things you didn't do and wonder where you went wrong. However, unless you spent the day idling on Facebook ignoring your children, you probably didn't do anything wrong and quite likely did some things very right. It's important that we look at our days when we feel this way and ask ourselves the following questions:

1) Did you spend enough time with your kids? If you answer yes, you did not only good, but great. If not, was it worth it? How do you feel about this? If you are struggling with how you feel then you need to consider that perhaps all these things planned just aren't worth it.

2) Did your child side track you somehow either by getting you to play or cuddle or provide for them what they need? If yes, another kudos to you. It's hard when our kids need us so intently, especially when it feels like we're moving away from what needs to get done, but remember that they are only young once and almost everything else can wait.

3) Did you enjoy some downtime for yourself? If yes, great! You need this for yourself. If not, why not? Think of it this way: if you aren't going to get everything done, then why sacrifice yourself too? You should make sure that you are still caring for you.



Tracy Cassels, PhD
tracy@evolutionaryparenting.com
<http://EvolutionaryParenting.com>

4) Did you spend quality time with your partner? If yes, wonderful. It may be as simple as a small chat while cuddled on the sofa over coffee, but time with our partners (if there is one) is essential to the health of that relationship.

Remembering these things may not get you more time, but it can certainly help you plan for and appreciate the time you do have. And if you do end the day still upset after going through all this, take 30 minutes if you can and knock one thing off your list. Going to sleep having accomplished just one thing that had you down can have a positive impact on your mental state and sleep, and we all know that can help you move forward the next day.

Tracy Cassels, PhD is the Director of Evolutionary Parenting, a science-based, attachment-oriented resource for families on a variety of parenting issues. In addition to her online resources, she offers one-on-one support to families around the world and is regularly asked to speak on a variety of issues from sleep to tantrums at conferences and in the media. She lives in Prince Edward County, Ontario, Canada with her husband and two children.