

12 time management tips for busy mums

Amanda Lecaude, Organising You

MANAGING A CAREER, BUSINESS, FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD OFTEN ALL AT THE SAME TIME, IT CAN REGULARLY FEEL LIKE YOU ARE A JUGGLER WITH MANY BALLS IN THE AIR ALL AT ONCE. AND THE TIME PRESSURES DON'T CHANGE WHETHER YOU HAVE SMALL OR OLDER CHILDREN. WITH JUST 24 HOURS IN A DAY, IT COMES DOWN TO HOW YOU MANAGE THE TIME YOU HAVE. ORGANISING EXPERT, AMANDA LECAUDE, SPILLS ON HER TOP TIME MANAGEMENT SECRETS.

Use the right diary/calendar that works for you and your family

This could be either a hard copy diary or an electronic diary. By using a diary that all the family is across it will make it much easier to know what is on and when. It is important that when using a diary that you note everything in it and those other family members can also access and use it. There are pros and cons to using either a hard copy or electronic diary but the important thing to keep in mind is whatever you use is that it works for everyone it needs too!

Don't seek perfection

As mums one trap we can at times find ourselves in is trying to lead the so-called 'perfect life' and be seen to be in control of all those juggling balls. Often in seeking perfection we end up not being able to get the things we want to get done as we strive too hard for everything to be perfect rather than sometimes just saying it is good enough and it will do.

It is important to again take the time to determine what you can live with and what is essential in your eyes and that of your family to get done i.e. can you live with the floors not being mopped every week or having all the beds made daily. Please note there are no right and wrongs here and you need to determine what your essentials and non-essential things are.

Use to do lists

Often as mums we have many different things on the go at once and sometimes think we will remember everything. Unfortunately our minds can only take so much and it is much easier on us mentally if we don't try and retain it all. It is much better to declutter your mind by keeping to do lists. Again you might like to keep physical to do lists or have these electronically in a device or an App (there are many great Apps available today so check out and find something that suits you). Useful to do lists include having different ones and you might like to consider breaking it down into daily, weekly and longer term projects.

Take the time to plan

This is really important as by doing this you are more likely to save yourself time in the long run. I usually suggest to my clients that a Sunday night is a good time to prepare for the week ahead and even have a family meeting (doesn't need to be long) with partners and older children in particular to ensure all activities are covered for the week ahead. This way no one can complain they didn't know either!

Prioritise

Knowing your priorities is a vital step when it comes to time management. In particular it is worth taking the time like, in step 3, to plan so you know what things actually need to be done and what ones can actually wait. One technique I often suggest is have 3 items on your daily list and if you get through them then you can add others but it can be useful to work out what the 3 things are that you must get done today.

Start your day a bit earlier

This can be a really effective way of just gaining a bit of time to make your day simpler. Even just 5-15 minutes more can make all the difference sometimes and take the pressure off. Give it a go and set the alarm a few minutes earlier tomorrow and see if it helps.

Seek help/outsource and delegate

Sometimes we again try to do it all when really it can be useful to ask for help from time to time, particularly during times of illness or busyness. Don't be afraid to ask, as you will be surprised that others are more than happy to assist you. No doubt you will have the opportunity to repay the favor at times to assist them too. Why not look at sharing drop offs and pick-ups with other mums for school or for after school activities.

In terms of outsourcing and delegating there are no doubt some things that you actually don't have to necessarily do yourself if you don't have the time that can be outsourced or delegated to others including cleaning, walking the dog, doing the shopping and doing the laundry.

Have a 'plan B'

It can be useful to think about having 'plan B's' for those times or things you are trying to do that don't actually work out the way you had planned. Sometimes it is useful to think of these prior to doing something rather than putting pressure on yourself to come up with options or ideas when you are really busy and time poor. For example it can be useful to have a list of people you can contact if you get really stuck when you can't leave work to pick up the children from daycare or school or your babysitter can't make it as planned.

Learn to say NO

This is something many of us as mums can struggle with. I know that I was very heavily involved in kindergarten, school and sporting clubs at one stage and fortunately I realised that I had to learn to say NO to some things as I just didn't have the time to do it all. It can be easy to over commit and volunteer our time before we actually even realise we are doing it! Being aware of your time in terms of what you do and don't have time for can be useful in learning to say NO.

Prepare the night before

Preparing the night before, by either working out what you need to do the following day or by putting out clothes or making lunches, will take the pressure off the next morning and make it a bit easier. Try and get the whole family on board for this, as it is a useful habit to develop for everyone, particularly children!

Cook extra meals

This is something you don't actually have to do specifically but rather when you make a meal like pasta sauce or something else why not just increase the quantity. This way you will create a few extra meals you can add to the freezer for those times when you either run out of time to buy supplies or to cook a meal.

Put everything in its place

A lot of disorganisation, clutter and overwhelm many of my clients experience is as a result of items/belongings not having a home or if they do not taking the time to put them away. Often this is how clutter piles up and what would have been a very quick task in putting something away now becomes a larger task that you don't really have time to tackle. An example of this is the laundry – when it is clean and dry take the 5-10 minutes to fold and put the clean items away rather than letting them pile up where you then add the next lot of clean clothes on top and then the pile just becomes bigger and more overwhelming. It will really help by putting items away where they belong, as it will save you more time in the long run!



Amanda Lecaude is an organising expert who loves being able to help people – her clients – get organised. She sees the difference it makes in their everyday lives, particularly families, just to have a way to create some TIME, SPACE and BALANCE! She is also very passionate about equipping school students with organising skills for life to maximise greater results primarily in secondary school and limit the overwhelm and frustration for both them and their parents.

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