



JUGGLING HOMESCHOOL & WORK

TIPS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



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CHURCH



INTRODUCTION

BY MARCEY BICKER

I've been dancing to the homeschooling/working tango for eight years...since my first child started Kindergarten. We started this journey from the need for my husband to actually see our school-age kids (he worked most weekends at the time). Throughout the years, this homeschool gig became a rhythm that our family appreciated, one in which I have continued to work either full-time or part-time. While our circumstances of how we started homeschooling may be different, whether you're a Suddenly-at-Homeschooler or one by choosing, here are a few general tips that may help those who are just starting out (and those of us who need a reminder):

#1. YOUR FAMILY IS UNIQUE

- o Avoid comparisons-- what works for one family may not work for yours. Your heart is naturally inclined to do what is best for your child. Trust your gut that you are making the right choices for this season for your family.
- o Make it work for your family-- ask yourself questions like:
 - “How can I make this work for my family?”
 - “What is essential and what can I eliminate?”
 - “What expectations need to be lowered or put on hold for this season?”
 - “What permissions do I need to give my family and myself during this season (i.e. permission to take breaks or cry or use rewards)?”

All of us are adjusting and experimenting during this unprecedented season. If something does not work for your family, it's ok to try something different.

#2. THE FIRST TWO WEEKS ARE THE HARDEST

- o Adjusting to new routines & a changed learning environment takes time -- Kids take time (and we adults, too) to adjust to changes. It takes time to fall into a new rhythm. If the first two weeks feel like a struggle, that's because your family is offbeat to its old rhythm...but you will all fall in sync once again into the new rhythm. Just give it a little bit of time (and be sure to have some chocolate hidden in your closet for a quick sanity-restorer!).
- o Adjusting to roles in relationships is challenging-- As a homeschool parent or suddenly-at-homeschool-parent, your role as an educator of your own kiddo has increased dramatically. As a heads up, your child will cry on you exponentially more than he would with a teacher. That's because your child feels safe with you in his emotions. That's a good thing. When your child feels frustrated, stressed or uncertain, his emotions will come out. It's very challenging for us as parents because we either just want our child to do the work, are tired ourselves, or feel unprepared for the situation we find ourselves in. Some good strategies are to ask questions to discover the root of your child's emotion, take a break, take a walk, or try it again tomorrow.

#3. SAVOR THIS SEASON

- o We have been given more minutes, hours and opportunities to create memories with the people we love most in the whole world. As challenging as it is to have our kids with us ALL THE TIME, this season will come to an end. How can we make the most of it? Instead of the days and nights flying by in a frenzied flurry of just mere survival, let's take the opportunity to extract every opportunity for joy, laughter, and memories. It's just a phase...don't miss it.

#4. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

- o Deflate your stress balloon-- When you feel the stress rising up inside of you, what helps you unwind? Make it a priority to do things that help you alleviate the stresses that will build up in the day. Exercise, going outdoors, reading, watching something that makes you laugh... whatever it is for you, find it and do it.
- o Give yourself (and your family) a break-- There will be good days and there will be days where you just...can't...even. So, it's important to know when and how to give yourself or your family a break. Maybe you need to order a pizza instead of making dinner, or use disposable plates, cups, etc. so there's not a mound of dishes in the sink all day long. I often have an "emergency" stash of food for days where I'm on the edge and just need to feed people without much effort (like Lunchables or a frozen pizza). I don't love these days, but I make allowances for them because they will happen. There will be some days when I have an essential work deadline; and on these days I will let my kids play more hours of video games than what's allotted in our home or allow them to have a movie marathon. And then there are some days, quite honestly, when it's ok to call it quits. If we are not making any progress on an assignment except to produce more tears, we'll walk away from it for a few hours or a day and do something else.

#5. MAKE A SIMPLE PLAN

- o Take time over the weekend to look at the week ahead-- Decide what school assignments need to be done each day and make a simple plan. No one is looking over your shoulder to make sure it's all color-coded, so don't waste time making it fancy unless that is beneficial to you. When I need my 5th and 7th Graders to do their work independently, I will make them a list of assignments to check off as they complete each one (it helps them keep track of what they need to accomplish before they can have free time).

Working while homeschooling is challenging, but it can be done. A few tips are:

- o Help your kids understand what you do-- Explain to your kids how you are helping people by doing your job (even if it is indirectly... and this includes work around the house, too). Kids understand that helping people is important—it's one of the first concepts they learn. When your kids understand that what you are doing is helping others, it will help them see that you are being a difference maker for someone else.
- o Explain the technology you are using is for work-- Kids make big assumptions. When they see you on your phone, tablet, or computer, they may assume that you are just looking at Facebook or playing (because that's a lot of what they do). Tell your kids how you are using your screens to do your job. Even as you do it, you can say something like "I am helping someone with an order they need to complete." I have given my kids permission to ask me what I'm doing (which may lend itself to being a highly annoying permission at some point, but so far it is working out).

#6. YOU ARE MORE INCREDIBLE THAN YOU KNOW

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