

5 Ways Busy Parents Can Be There for Their Kids

Being there for your kids can be challenging for busy parents when work is demanding a lot of your time and energy. On a recent Family First podcast, award-winning comedian and devoted family man Jeff Foxworthy spoke with me about the challenges of juggling a career and a commitment to home. "Life is about choices and consequences," he observed. And, Jeff made the choice to be there for his children and made it a top priority to be at home with them even with his busy schedule.

Here are five ways to be there for your children:

1. Plan ahead.

Are there must-be-there occasions like parent-teacher conferences, sports events or recitals in the coming month? Put them on your work calendar, just as you would any other important appointment. Then, to the extent possible, arrange your work schedule and business travel around those things. Notice that, in doing so, you are making your family activities the top priority by putting them on the calendar first.

2. Minimize overnight travel.

Your work might require you to travel. If so, determine if your trip requires you to stay overnight. When my children were growing up, rather than be away overnight before a meeting, whenever possible, I would take an early, early morning flight to get where I needed to be. Then, I'd come back that same night so I could arrive home for dinner or to tuck them in bed. I'd then be able to spend time with them the next morning and take them to school.

3. Maximize your moments.

When possible and appropriate, use your lunch hour or breaks to handle personal calls, errands or working out so you don't have to take time after work to do those things and be away from your family.

4. Stay connected.

Being there in person is really important. But on those days when you really can't be home, be sure to stay connected. Even if you can't be there in person, with all the technology that is at our fingertips these days, there is no excuse for not having a virtual presence. Call. Send texts. Arrange Skype or Facetime sessions. You can schedule reminders on your Smartphone. Here are the kind of shorthand reminders I've put on my phone: *Text Emily this morning re: me praying for her. Call Marky to encourage him.*

5. Defer the dream or desire.

Many years ago and throughout my years of practicing law, I had a desire to serve in public office. Subsequently, I had the opportunity to run for Congress. After doing some real soul-searching and discussing it with my wife, Susan, I determined that I was not willing to sacrifice the time with my family to do it. The decision was made, and I've never looked back. In hindsight, I would make the same decision all over again.

At the end of the day, you may find that you've got to make a tough career decision so that you can be there for your kids. It may be turning down a good opportunity. Or, you may find that your current job is keeping you away from home simply too much. You can see the effect on your spouse and the children. You're not really getting ahead at work if your family is being left behind at home.

Don't fool yourself into thinking, *If we can just get through*

the next year or so, it will be OK. Instead, look forward into the future. As Jeff Foxworthy said, “Nothing else that I do in my life is gonna matter a hundred years from now ... but the kids that I leave behind and the kids that they have...” For Jeff, that meant turning down movie roles over the summer when his daughters were at home because he did not want to be away on location for six weeks or more. Maybe you need to look for a different job with fewer demands. The rewards there may decrease, but what you will gain at home will be priceless.

Listen in on how former NFL player Danny Wuerffel keeps his marriage and family a top priority during a time of busyness.

What do you do so you can be there for your kids? {eo}

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