

THE Local Guide for Active Urban Families August/September 2009

West Coast Families

westcoastfamilies.com

Get Ready!

It's Back to School
We Go!

Are Your Kids Stressed?

New Zealand

It's Closer Than
You Think

The Cool
Thing
About

Grandparents...

yummy
mummy

Your Mommy Life Makeover





Your Mommy Life Makeover

By Jennifer Fresher

We've all gone through those moments when the idea of tearing out our hair has sounded oddly soothing, when the hundreds of lists in our heads collide and the only left is to sit in the corner and (gently) bang our heads against the wall. So how do you do it? We thought we would ask a few experts—people whose job it is to help others stay on track, stay focused, and accomplish their goals, whether those goals are about career, health or just plain being organized. We hope their thoughts and advice will inspire you to pick up where you left off, and take charge of your life—in all areas. Because you *can* do this.

The Time Factor

Busy working mothers juggle a lot of hats these days. Even stay-at-home moms seem to have too much going on. How can they get rid of the mental clutter and help themselves focus and relax, exercise occasionally, and maybe even carve out some personal time? How do they juggle work and family without sacrificing one or the other?

Linda Chu:

Focus is the key. When the mind is cluttered, it's like a kid in the candy store, not knowing what to pick first. The time honoured to-do list is key. The only problem is not the list itself, but our lack of focus, prioritization, and follow-through. Jotting down all your to-do's only de-clutters the mind. Prioritizing what to do next and when, is critical in helping to keep you on track and in focus.

Using a priority action system like <http://www.outofchaos.ca/2006/02/14/the-tickler-file/>, will keep you on track. Note: this system can be modified to suit individual needs. When you have a priority action system in place, you are able to plan your highest priority items each and every day, but most importantly when emergencies come up (and with kids, the unexpected does happen), you are able to re-shuffle your priorities, as long as you know in advance what they are.

If you want to start your own business, a business plan is key, where you spend time to determine what your goals are and how you will achieve these goals, including monetary & time goals. Without a map, you have no sense of direction.

Obviously family life is important, so this needs to be factored into your ultimate daily schedule. Do you want to only work weekends? Are you only available after your drop off your children and before you pick them up from school? Find a line of work that will give you the time you need, the income you want. If it is important enough, you will schedule the time to make things happen. Just like all those competing weekend birthday parties & multiple kids' activities.

Patti Bishop:

"Not enough time!" is definitely the biggest obstacle I hear from my busy moms. Notice I said "obstacle" and not "barrier"—there are ways around it! Instead of having a workout be an hour—you can split up the time

Meet the Experts



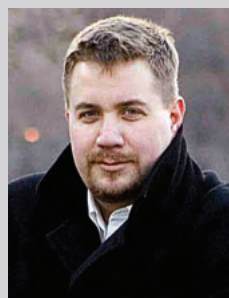
Patti Bishop

Patti Bishop has been in the fitness industry for ten years and is the owner and founder of North Star Fitness. Along with her growing team of professionals, she works specifically with women and aging adults (or the young at heart!), and offers programs in pre- and post-natal fitness. www.northstarfitness.ca



Linda Chu

Linda Chu is an Organizing Consultant and the National President for Professional Organizers in Canada. Her company, Out of Chaos, provides tangible strategies for companies and individuals on how to master the overwhelming challenges we all face in gaining control of our time, space, and information. Her clients include General Motors, IKEA and Whirlpool Canada, and she has frequently appeared on Citytv Breakfast Television and CBC Radio. www.outofchaos.ca



Christopher Flett

Christopher Flett, author of *What Men Don't Tell Women About Business* (Wiley), is the founder of the Ghost CEO™, a professional development company focused on women. The Ghost CEO offers customized programming for 'mompreneurs'. www.ghostceo.com



Jacqueline Flett

Jacqueline Flett is a lawyer practicing in the areas of wills, estate planning, estate administration, real estate and small business at the law firm of Singleton Urquhart LLP. Jacqueline is member of the Wills and Estates and Corporate Law sections of the Canadian Bar Association. Jacqueline is passionate about helping people protect their assets and grow their businesses. jflett@singleton.com.

throughout the day in smaller blocks; 15 minutes in the morning, half an hour at lunch and 15 minutes after dinner. It is the cumulative time that counts but you have to make the best use of your time.

Try incorporating exercises into your morning routine: pushups at the kitchen counter, balance on one leg while getting lunches ready, step-ups while brushing your teeth, triceps dips at the edge of the bathtub, crunches on the floor and squats while waiting for the shower to warm up.

Stroller Stride type classes are fantastic for new moms, but once a baby starts to walk and move, workouts need to change. If finances are an issue, moms can get together and create a babysitting co-op where one mom baby-sits while the other two workout. Sharing the cost of a babysitter is another option or tag-teaming the babysitting between partners. While one partner works out, swims or goes for a jog, the other partner watches their child and then they switch after an hour!

Many gyms offer babysitting between set hours. If you can make it to these times, the actual cost can be quite reasonable. Once your children are able to play safely on the playground equipment, the playground can be your gym too! There are so many fun ways to turn an hour at the park into a workout for you. Try decline crunches on the slide, walking lunges, hamstring curls and knee tucks with the swings and of course pushups—you can always find a space to do pushups!

Christopher Flett:

The first step to a woman getting past the guilt around family/work balance is understanding that she can “have it all.” Being a good parent doesn’t mean you can’t have a career, nor does focusing on your career make you a bad mother. The secret is having separation in your life. When you are with your family, be with your family. When you are at work, focus on your work. Unless you are a neurosurgeon on call, turn the cell phone/blackberry off when you get home and on weekends. Work will always be there. When you are at work, work diligently to increase your professional value and find joy in the work that you are doing. Having success in both parts of your life comes from having systems and backup plans. Don’t just have one babysitter, have three. That way if one isn’t available, you have a backup. When you are taking time off to be with your family, find someone you trust to cover you in the event of an emergency at work or in your business. Train this person how to handle situations that can come up, and then let it go. Kids don’t like it when mom is continuously checking her blackberry and work doesn’t like it when a woman misses a meeting because she has to get her kids from school. Find resources to cover your transitions between work and family and your stress will go down.

One local resource for women looking for multiple babysitters is Lullaby League (www.lullabyleague.ca) This service allow parents to meet 10-20 babysitters at a mixer in under an hour. Another well known service is Nannies on Call (www.nanniesoncall.com).

Set personal, professional, and financial goals for yourself. Make sure that every goal has a measurable plan associated with it. Find an ‘accountability’ partner to share your goals with and to keep you on track. If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it. Women put their own goals behind those of their partners, their family, and their friends. Focus on yourself so that you can empower other women to do the same. It is women’s time to shine but you have to step out into the light.

The STUFF Factor

Children’s toys, books, homework, STUFF always seems to be a big issue for moms. How can they organize all the stuff and get their kids to maintain it? Is there a way to organize your husband into a co-manager, rather than another person to look after?

Linda Chu:

Less is more. In these economic times, gluttony is not a game to be playing. A serious purge session is in store for everyone. Get everyone involved. Start kids young by personally taking them down to transition homes & street youth centres, etc so that they can see for themselves those in need and less fortunate.

Create a box for each person of items that you know you have not used, but can not bear to let go of. List an inventory of items. Date the box. Identify the name & number of a charity for donation. Store the box away in your garage/basement/storage locker. Mark a date on your calendar for 6 months or 1 year for this date (whatever is reasonable to you). If you have not touched these items in this period, your commitment will be to donate the contents of the box. Do not open the box, hence the inventory list. Touch/feel/smell will bring back memories & intentions making it harder to let go...

Regarding husbands...a family counsellor/therapist I am not! [laughing] I would recommend that communication is key. Just like when your got married and talked about children, your expectations and goals must be out in the open and talked about. Be clear in what each expects of each other. Who is responsible for what. Division of tasks is very important. Do not overlook that unpaid work (like being a stay-at-home mother) is still work, with all the emotional and physical demands of working outside for a paycheck.

If budget allows, you may want to look at leveraging off some tasks to auxiliary services like a housekeeper, lawn-mowing service, personal chef, professional organizer etc. What is your time worth? Is time better spent on family vs. the entire weekend on certain chores? You decide.

Linda Chu’s Top 5 Tips for Keeping Your Family Organized

1. Get kids involved early. When they are young, teach them by picture/colour label identification where to return things (i.e. Polly Pockets go into the bin/container with the corresponding picture/colour pink label).
2. Create an accessible lunch-making station in your kitchen, complete with lunch bags, pre-portioned baggies/small containers of snacks, fruit bars, juice boxes, fruit, etc. This way, one of the chores for your kids is to pack their own lunches.
3. Routine is key. Introduce specific times in each day for your family to do chores, where everyone has a task to do. One could be collecting all the dirty laundry, another to transfer from washer to dryer, etc. Create a schedule of chores and a points system for completion. The rewards do not have to be money. Think instead one-on-one time with mommy or daddy, movie night or take-out dinner—their choice. Make it about family time. Those that eat together stay together...
4. Bulk cook freezer meals. This will save you dearly when you are in a rush in between picking up one kid and rushing another to their soccer game. It’s a healthier alternative and individual portions makes it easy for anyone to help themselves and microwaves something fast.
5. Keep a master calendar for everyone’s activities, so anyone at anytime is aware of who is where and when.

The Legal Factor

Most parents have RESPs and RRSPs in place, savings accounts and life insurance set up, all to protect their families. Is there anything else they should be doing?

Jacqueline Flett:

GET YOUR WILL DONE. This is item one, two and three on this list. In your Will, the following issues should be addressed:

1. Name a guardian. If either you or your spouse (who is your child's biological parent or adoptive parent) pass away, the survivor would become the sole guardian. But if you both pass away, the court will appoint a guardian. The court will usually appoint the closest relative (next-of-kin). This is problematic if:
 - a. There are two equally related next-of-kin who both want to be guardian (i.e. your parents and your parents-in-law)
 - b. There are any relatives you do not want raising your children;
 - c. There are any relatives you expect may pursue a battle over guardianship;
 - d. There are no suitable relatives;
 - e. You want your child to remain with a step-parent.
2. Name one or more alternate guardians. If your named guardian is someone that you are close to, it is possible that you could be in a common disaster with that person. Have a back-up just in case.
3. Appoint an executor and an alternate executor of your Will. These people need to be capable of managing your children's inheritances for the long-term. If your children are young, your executor will likely be handling their finances and dealing with the guardians until your children reach the age of majority.

If you are a single parent because of a breakdown in your relationship, your former spouse would likely be awarded guardianship of your children. If your children's other biological parent is not in the picture at all, it is even more critical to have a guardian appointed in your Will because you do not have a second-parent safety net. If you are concerned about your children being returned to an unfit or abusive former spouse, you need to raise those issues with your lawyer to ensure that your reasons for wanting to exclude that person as a guardian are properly documented.

Some factors to consider when choosing a guardian are:

- Does the person like your kids?
- Do your kids like the person?
- Do you have similar parental values and parenting styles?
- Does the person have sufficient financial resources and, if not, do you have sufficient life insurance to provide that person with access to enough resources to care for your children until they reach adulthood?
- Is the person's location satisfactory?
- Is the person young enough and in good health to take care of your kids until they reach adulthood?

The Work Factor

Women face a lot of choices in the workplace or when running their own business. How can they get ahead and stay on top? What should they avoid doing?

Christopher Flett:

Women give up their power and this can be challenging to get back. They need to be clear that business today is not gender specific. Their actions will either play into stereotypes, or will support them being seen as an exceptional professional. In the book, "What Men Don't Tell Women About Business", over 16 points are covered on how women inadvertently give up their power in business.

Here are some of the more common pitfalls:

- Make excuses
- Not getting to the point
- Taking things personally
- Declaring open war on others
- Gossiping
- Not understanding professional endorsement
- Accepting poor treatment
- Being selfless rather than selfish
- Not asking for what they want (instead asking for what they think they can get)
- Expecting that everyone will act fairly towards them
- Not having a Plan B (backup plan)
- Being too loyal

Get advice on how to build your business from other entrepreneurs who understand the challenges moms face. Beware of government resources online, most have been built by government employees, not business owners. Find someone who understands business and the dynamics of being a parent.

Know that women are leading the edge of self-employment based in the home. You aren't alone in doing this. Find a good mentor who can help you through the challenging parts and you too can join the ranks of successful female entrepreneurs that can have it all.

The Health Factor

What's the best way for busy moms to lose those post-baby pounds, get more energy and stay healthy and strong?

Patti Bishop

When it comes to losing body fat, what you eat is number one! Getting back to or developing healthy eating habits are key to fat loss. Along with diet, comes strength training—they go hand in hand. If you dramatically change your diet but don't start or maintain a strength training program, you can lose muscle mass. Your muscles are your fat burners. Thirdly, you want to add in cardio because you need to keep your heart and lungs strong too. Instead of doing steady state cardio for long periods of time, add in some high intensity bursts of speed to both challenge yourself and boost your metabolism.

The first year after birth is a challenging time for fat loss. You need to be kind to yourself—your body has gone through a lot—you just made a baby! Your body will hold onto body fat while you are breast feeding and if you are stressed out. Sleep deprivation is definitely a stress. Once your baby gets on a more regular sleep schedule and your sleep improves, your body will start to relax and let go of the extra pounds.

Watch out for the following common pitfalls that mothers are most prone to:

- Eating what their kids eat
- Eating their children's leftovers
- Eating prepackaged food
- Not preparing ahead of time
- Skipping meals
- Eating late at night
- Waiting too long between meals
- Not drinking enough water
- Depending on coffee for "energy"

My favourite thing is to put a sticker on my kitchen calendar after I have completed a workout (walking, strength training, swimming, yoga, etc.) The more gold stars I see at the end of each week, the better I feel! ■