



## Tip Sheet: How To Get More Time To Spend With Your Family

The state of busyness is the catchcry for many of today's modern families. *So how do you go about creating more time to spend with your family and use it effectively?* The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG), the nation's leading friendly society with the mission of supporting children and families, has prepared this tip sheet to help you gain some more family time.

### ▪ **Getting your priorities straight**

When asked, most people will say that their family and friends are their highest priority, but their actions don't always demonstrate these priorities. A simple not-negotiable commitment, such as spending a small chunk of time daily with your family, can realign your priorities.

### ▪ **Getting organised**

Many people confuse being neat with being organised. While a tidy and neat home is attractive and appealing, being organised means a whole lot more than neat. It means having a system that works for each member of your family and your family as a whole – having an agreed upon place for items so that everyone can find them quickly and easily, and being on top of your paperwork, and knowing which day Fred needs his soccer sports clothes at school. Try these ideas to become more organised:

- ❖ Create a workspace for processing all your paperwork – make this your organisation hub
- ❖ Put all incoming paper into one place in your hub
- ❖ Set-up *tickler* files (files for each day of the month and month of the year) as reminders for things that need to be done by certain months or dates – bring forward your reminders, and check the files daily
- ❖ Keep a schedule on the fridge for the whole family and write everything on it
- ❖ Try to create a place for things and return them to that place after use – think car keys, phones, school bags, homework, etc

### ▪ **Setting goals**

To-do lists can really help with getting you and your family organised, but if you haven't set the big goals first and worked out the daily actions required to reach your goals, you may find you haven't made the progress you hoped you'd achieve by a specific timeframe. A well-developed goal focuses on what you want to achieve and specifies the details associated with it. Productivity expert and author of *Leave The Office Earlier*, Laura Stack recommends using her *SPAGHETTI* model to develop effective goals.

- ❖ **S**-pecific: spell out what you want to achieve and quantify it so you can measure it
- ❖ **P**-otential problems: what obstacles do you expect to encounter – plan to resolve them before they happen
- ❖ **A**-cceptable: ensure you want to achieve the goal – if you're just doing it to please others, there's less incentive to achieve it
- ❖ **G**-ift: what is the reward attached to the goal – consider setting up milestone rewards to motivate progress
- ❖ **H**-ard enough: your goal should stretch you but be based on reality not fantasy
- ❖ **E**-valuate: review your goals and your progress periodically to keep yourself on track
- ❖ **T**-angible: write down your goals to make them more concrete
- ❖ **T**-ime bound: set target dates for each of the steps required to reach your goal
- ❖ **I**-nspirational: ensure your goal is motivational, visualise achieving it and empower it with emotion

- **Planning time**  
Creating a schedule and staying on track with it can be one of the most important strategies you can adopt to manage your time. If you find it hard to stay on track, try keeping a time log to determine your time bandits.
- **Children's time is different to adult time**  
Remember that children have a different level of concentration and focus to adults. Angela Rossmannith author of the book, *When Will the Children Play? Finding Time for Childhood*, says young children particularly tend to dip in and out of activities moving from this to that, so they want different levels of engagement with you. Your children's concept of time is more free flowing and doesn't really sit too well with scheduling. Make sure you have reasonable expectations of spending time with them and focus on giving them attention in shorter bursts of time, and giving them your presence for longer periods when they can engage with you intermittently.
- **Ask for help**  
Trying to keep on top of all the activities required to run a family is tough especially if you try to do everything yourself. Delegating age-appropriate activities to your children can be fun and helps build independence and self-reliance. For older children, linking tasks with pocket money is a great way to gain participation. Alternatively, try getting the children to help you as you do each activity. This way you can interact with each other and make the task more enjoyable.
- **Making choices**  
Juggling a whole host of activities can really put the pressure on you and your family, particularly when you throw employment into the equation. It's hard to remember that you really do have choices and the power to make them when the pressure is on, but making choices that support your goals and priorities in life is one of the most empowering things you can do. Whether it's choosing to work for a more family-friendly employer or turning off the TV for the night, you can choose an alternative approach to many things.
- **What's your next action?**  
David Allen, author of the popular book, *Getting Things Done* suggests focusing on determining what's the next action for every item on your to-do list that will take you more than two minutes. With this focus he suggests you can keep all your projects moving towards your desired outcomes. For to-do items that will take two minutes or less, he suggests just doing them.
- **Share the load**  
Creating a community of parents to share activities such as babysitting or picking up children from school not only helps save time but also creates a support network for your family in times of need.

**More suggestions about how to get more time to spend with your family can be found at:**

- KidsLife – [www.kidslife.com.au](http://www.kidslife.com.au)
- David Allen, author of *Getting Things Done* – [www.davidco.com](http://www.davidco.com)
- Laura Stack, *The Productivity Pro* and author of *Leave The Office Earlier* – [www.productivitypro.com](http://www.productivitypro.com)

ASG provides an education benefits program that helps parents plan for their children's future education using the benefits of collective mutual pooling, from around \$10\* per week – less than the cost of a family takeaway meal. For more information about ASG and its programs, phone 1800 648 945 or visit: [www.asg.com.au](http://www.asg.com.au)

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\* Depending on the age of the child at enrolment

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- Further resources and information for parents can be found at ASG's website: [www.asg.com.au/resources](http://www.asg.com.au/resources)
  - Additional media releases and information for media representatives, including a profile on ASG, can be found at ASG's website: [www.asg.com.au/media](http://www.asg.com.au/media)

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