



## **Can Working Mothers Have Their Cake and Eat it Too? How to Avoid Parenting Burnout** By Kelly Nault, M.A.

To focus on the family and put them first is as natural to mothers as breathing. Failing to focus on the family is rarely a choice for any Mom—it is simply a way of life.

Not long ago 'bringing home the bacon' was traditionally the father's role, but now many working mothers are 'bringing home the bacon' too. Today, 50% of the mothers in our country are working full time, and most of these moms experience the stress of trying to balance it all, with parenting being one of the big stressors. Sound familiar?

### **The Only Way Working Mothers Can Focus on the Family AND Have It All**

Although working mothers bring home some of the bacon (and if you are a single mother, all of the bacon), it hasn't changed the fact that most working mothers are doing all the cooking of the bacon too.

It's probably no surprise to you that married women consistently report doing more of the household chores than their spouse. In addition to taking on more chores, it is common for working mothers to put unrealistic expectations and pressure on themselves—to be the perfect Mom, perfect spouse, perfect daughter, perfect friend, and perfect career woman as well. Yes, many of us working Moms have an invisible, mental "S" tattooed on our bellies, as we strive to be that unattainable Super Woman! Yet sadly, Super Woman is often Super Stressed Woman.

When interviewed on the radio, I am often asked if it is possible for working mothers to have it all. My response is always, "YES! It is possible for working mothers to have it all—BUT only if they ask for and accept help."

The trouble is, most working mothers have difficulty hanging up their Super Woman cape and won't accept much help (if at all).

### **Three Ways to Prevent Parenting Burnout for Working Mothers**

Even though most Moms know it takes a village to raise a child, most mothers don't ask their village for help. This puts undue stress on both moms and their families. The following simple tips can help you prevent the stress that leads to parenting burnout.

1. **Parenting is a big job.** Realize you can't do it all alone, effectively. You can't do it all (and do it well) by yourself. The best thing you can do for your family is to ask for help.

Burning your candle at both ends only leads to parenting burnout, and this is not healthy for you nor for your family.

2. **Graciously accept help.** When someone asks if they can help you, always answer “Yes, thank you” and then figure out how. Let others in your life, especially your children and spouse, help you more. We all want to contribute—you may recognize this truth in the sense of achievement you get from doing so much. By accepting more help you will boost your children’s and spouse’s self-esteem. When they do help, remember to thank them, and focus on what they did well. Remember, focusing on what our loved ones didn’t do does not motivate them to want to help us in the future.
3. **Find ways to farm out the things you don’t like to do.** Don’t like to iron? Consider sending it to the cleaner and use the extra time to focus on your family. Don’t like to clean but love to cook? Trade chores with household members, or with a girlfriend who loves to do the things you don’t.

### **How Mothers Can Focus on the Family and Get Their Work Done**

The day you die your inbox will have messages unanswered, your laundry hamper will still hold dirty clothes and your to-do list will likely have items left incomplete. On that day though, will you look back and feel that your focus on your family was a fulfilling journey, or sadly realize it became a chore you felt you *had* to do?

Make certain your focus on the family is satisfying—choose to balance your work and family by finally hanging up your “Super Mom” cape and letting others help you. It is all about prioritizing. Let go of what truly doesn’t matter in the big picture, and cherish what truly matters to you—your loved ones, your hobbies, and the time you take to truly be present at work and at play.

**Kelly Nault-Matzen**, MA, family counselor, corporate parenting spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You’re About To Go Off The Deep End, Don’t Take Your Kids With You* shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! To gain access to more parenting tools and to access your free online parenting course visit [www.ultimateparenting.com](http://www.ultimateparenting.com)



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