

Family-life balance

Romance and parenthood in the same sentence?



RELATIONSHIPS With Joanne Wilson

DO YOU struggle to find balance between your role as a parent and then as a spouse? You have plenty of company there, as everyone at some point finds this a challenge.

They may well be your two most important and rewarding roles of your life but juggling both can be the most difficult.

You can achieve balance and the romance that comes with it.

Try my 10 tips, designed to help you think, feel and act differently to get you on your way to a happier partner, happier children and, most importantly, a happier you.

1) Think of yourself as human

Many of us fail to see the inherent symptoms of being an imperfect human such as being moody, tired and forgetful etc. While excelling yourself is fabulous, recognising your limitations and embracing them is another thing. Why not lose your aspirations for "super mum" or "wonder dad" sometimes? A newborn is sure to take the focus off your spouse during this tricky time, however acknowledging each other's lack of resilience in the face of lack of sleep will certainly be appreciated.

2) Discover your personal definitions

What is your definition of a Stepford wife or the perfect husband? How do you describe a loving parent? Where did these ideas come from – a movie? Are you aiming to recreate what your parents did or do everything differently? It's worth considering as operating inconsistently with your values and unhealthy expectations can leave you feeling like a bad or absent parent or partner.

3) Look at the big picture

In the grand scheme of things, your kids will not likely remember you forgot the money for the school bake sale (I

forgot again this year). Your wife will probably not remember you were 10 minutes late last week. They will remember the things that mattered. Make it a non-negotiable to get to that important footy game or ballet concert they are super excited about. Take a moment to send him or her some words of encouragement for their big presentation this week. Focus on what counts. Peter Banning (Peter Pan) did in the end.

4) Minimise the guilt

Carrying the heavy sack of the times when you couldn't be there or a Clark Griswold-esque parenting failure gets in the way of being the best parent and partner you can be today. Do yourself and everyone a favour and forgive yourself. It's a choice to forgive, so learn from it and launch yourself to success as a result.

5) Let go of worry

Similarly, worry stands in the way of being our best selves. If worry tricks you into thinking you're doing something useful, it's usually pointless. The next time you find yourself ruminating about upsetting someone or forgetting something, either do something about it (eg. ask them how they feel) or simply let it go and focus on moving forward.

6) Maintain healthy boundaries

Lack of boundaries leads to children interrupting, insufficient private time and taking on too much. Healthy boundaries involve consistent child bed times, healthy routines and self-compassion. Do you have a regular "date" with your partner to protect your relationship? Do you intentionally provide consistent emotional attentiveness for your children so it facilitates time for your romantic relationship too? Captain Von Trapp learnt this.

7) Focus on teamwork

It is vital you and your partner are a united front. This means agreeing about what kind of parents you want to be and supporting each other. Hold regular discipline discussions in

private then remember to back your partner in the parenting decisions. Show appreciation for Mr Mum's efforts. Parenting is relentless so simple words can go a long way.

8) Model healthy behaviours

You are mentoring your children every day. Show your children the value of having life balance and prioritising relationships by modelling this in your actions. Children benefit from seeing you put your relationship with your spouse first at times. Date night booked yet?

9) Communicate with everyone – including yourself

Never forget the value of open, honest communication. Firstly, regularly tap into your own feelings and needs, then be brave enough to seek feedback from your partner and children. Don't assume they know what's in your head. Healthy communication leads to more balance and harmony for everyone.

10) Romance and intimacy is paramount

Remember your first date? Why not recreate those early days with something reminiscent? Can you improve on it with a wonderful surprise? Reach out to friends or family to help facilitate time out with regular babysitting. Be okay to ask for help as parenting and partnering isn't always easy.

Adopt these tips and you and your family will be "climbing every mountain" around the Sunshine Coast singing Do Re Mi before you know it.

YOUR SAY:

How do you balance romance and parenthood? Email Joanne your thoughts at jo@theconfidantecounselling.com.

Joanne is a neuropsychologist and relationship specialist of The Confidante Counselling. Email jo@theconfidantecounselling.com or visit www.sunshinecoastcounselling.com.



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