

## Parenting Amidst the Madness: 10 Ways to Keep Your Child Thriving When You Have No Time

### Excerpt #1<sup>1</sup>

#### ***A weekday in the life of a mom...***

**Early Morning:** Alarm goes off at 6:30. Wake from a dream of making out with a coworker. Gross. Put on CNN while doing a quick couple of miles on the treadmill (spouse is already on the stationary bike with iPod), a few times glancing at the personal organizer to get a sense for the day. Finish with the treadmill; turn on the shower, shake the kids up from sleep and tell them to get ready. Shower. Dry hair. Check kids' progress; mandate cease-fire between eldest two. Put on makeup. Come down stairs for first cup of coffee (thank God for automatic coffee makers). Holler up to kids that their lives are at risk if they're late for the bus. Make instant oatmeal for middle child, unwrap two granola bars for the eldest and slap milk on some sugar concoction for the youngest (no energy/time to try to get her to eat something healthy today). "Ask" husband to empty the dishwasher while he's checking the scores on ESPN (make mental note to call him at lunch to ask about the glaring look). Remind eldest two children that we're selling the mephitic dog if they can't take care of him without being reminded (know they don't know the word "mephitic" but they get the point and it's never too early to prep for SATs). Quickly scan children's homework for obvious errors. Give kids money for lunch telling them not to eat pizza or pasta (this morphs into don't ask/don't tell later). Eldest child asks, for the first time, when we can get the clay for the map of the US that she has to turn in tomorrow: avoid having a stroke by encouraging child to seek out father for answer. Phone rings; the fool calling at this hour deserves the answering machine. Tell kids to get into my car (to be taken to the bus stop) while I gather up stuff for work. Eldest comes back in and says that my car has a flat. Manage to keep swearing inside head. Tell kids to walk to the bus stop—ignoring eye rolls during kiss goodbyes—and ask spouse if he can take care of the flat and I drive his car; he says yes 'cause he enjoys watching the auto club guy watching him, watching him change the tire. Get out the door 10 minutes late, but make the time up in traffic with enough time to spare to get a fresh cup of coffee going into work.

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**Morning and Afternoon:** Boss out on vacation. Easier to get stuff done. Subordinates seem more cheerful and eager today. Call spouse to check about morning tensions; it's okay. Arrange to have lunch with best friend for first time in four months. Get about 85% done of what is in organizer to do; take the rest home. Great workday overall.

**Afternoon and Early Evening:** On the way home grab three kids' meals from fast food joint. Pick them up from latchkey program at 5:30 and give them the meals in between making unfinished phone calls from work. Drop eldest off at soccer practice 10 minutes early; husband meets us there to pick up youngest and take her to ballet class. Drop middle child off at soccer practice 5 minutes late. Stay and watch end of middle child's soccer practice while making a few unfinished edits to a report on the laptop. Spend a few minutes of quality time with middle child on the way to pick up eldest. Middle child asks if we can pick up ice cream on the way home as they have been good; my turn for eye roll, but I agree. Get home by 7:15. See husband's dishes in the sink but decide to ignore. Tell older two kids to finish their homework once they're done with the ice cream and bring to me AND dad for checking; tell youngest she can watch her Care Bears DVD. Grab a glass of red wine, nuke some soup and throw together a salad; swear to self while giving dog his dinner. Eat while finishing edits on report; interrupted by youngest who asks if she can have a sleepover. Take occasion of interruption to tie the beast outside (where's a dog-thief when you need him). Tell youngest, for 106<sup>th</sup> time this school year, that sleepovers are not allowed on school nights but suggest maybe this weekend (note that this may be her way of getting a spot in the queue ahead of her sibs).

Check on eldest two; eldest finished homework and has started US map with dad— helps me remember why I married him; watching further it's unclear if the child or man-boy is doing more of the work. Middle child is caught playing favorite sci-fi video game with homework half finished on the floor: amount of blood on the screen mandates silent double check of rating on the box while boy is told he's grounded from his video games until the weekend (make mental note to figure out how to enforce that) and to finish his homework. Youngest asleep in front of TV. Wake her up, give her a quick bath and tuck her into bed. Middle child has homework done and is on internet playing video games; decide to ignore internet play as no energy for the debate on the definition of "video game" in previous grounding. Dad and eldest working on project still (seems more of the project on them than board). Warn all that showers are due in 15

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minutes. Go downstairs to throw a quick load of laundry in; resist urge for another glass of wine. Let the beast in. Make two quick business calls. Holler upstairs “showers!” Back to report on laptop. Eldest comes downstairs, dripping wet, half naked, stating middle child has filled a water gun up with toilet water and was squirting in the shower: tell her to tell her father but she says he’s asleep. Stomp upstairs—this causes the dog to start barking and a mild sprain in my ankle; limp to son’s bathroom and bang on the door, asking him if he is squirting toilet water. He says it’s from the water from the back of the tank and is clean. Tell him he better be dry, in pajamas, with teeth brushed properly in 15 minutes or find another place to live, together with his smelly dog (want to be sure he knows what I mean this time). Youngest comes out of room rubbing eyes asking if I’m okay. Tell her I am and to go lay with her father. Sit with eldest on her bed for a few minutes of quality time, while I admire her project in the corner. Come out of her room and note husband sitting on son’s bed talking quietly; note youngest in her bed somehow. Go downstairs to finish laundry. Husband comes downstairs and puts on TV, asking how my day was. I say “typical” and ask how his was. He says “same thing” but is into the crime drama thing he’s watching. Ask him if he’d mind starting the dishwasher, hoping not to have to point out the dishes in the sink. Think there’s a sigh, but he does it. Don’t want to know if dishes are still in the sink.

**Late Evening:** Sit down in family room with husband and fold clothes. Finish report. Husband goes up at 10 to bed, kissing me on the forehead. I stay and watch the news and answer a funny email from best friend. Decide to get a quick jump on work tomorrow while a sitcom plays in the background. Start having hallucinations of Care Bears dancing, laughing maniacally and flipping me off; decide that’s a signal that I should get to bed. Go upstairs. Check on each child, blessing them silently and kissing them on the forehead. Too tired to brush teeth, so just rinse mouth with bacteria killing thing. Change into gown. Get into bed. Husband rolls towards me suggestively. Tell him only if he’s into necrophilia. Notice clock says 11:30 as the eyes close.