

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

Excerpt #2¹

A weekday in the life of a dad...

Early Morning: Where's a hammer to crush that *&^% alarm. 5:45. I'm a slave. Ask wife if she could live with me quitting my job and declaring bankruptcy. She chuckles and says "sure." Roll out of bed. Put on the Tivod rerun of Sopranos episode. Shower. Do a quick mental checklist re need to shave today. Better do it; getting too old for Miami Vice look anyway. Get dressed, checking with wife to see if tie matches other clothes (she's beaten me out of the idea that I can manage this). Go downstairs, almost tripping on evil-seed *&^% cat. Make coffee. Put out bowls for kids. Check email. Read how the lowly Mets are doing; why do I punish myself? At least the Giants stand a decent chance this year. Wife comes downstairs telling me she wants to put the kids up for adoption: I say, "go girl". Kids argue over who gets to pour which cereal into which bowl. I put on my iPod and remind the wife we agreed to let the kids settle their own disputes unless there is blood or property damage. They seem to work it out. Oldest boy asks if he can have a popsicle: I tell him that his next dad will probably let him. Youngest boy asks if they'd have to move if that happens. See wife checking homework with a frown. Asks if I can make sure to fill out and mail the registration forms for basketball. I say yes. Ask her if she can call the bank and find out what the miscellaneous charge is on our checking: she says yes, but complains (something about it would be nice if I didn't have to ask her to do something whenever she asks me to do something), but I'm busy gathering up my work papers. Boys come by for a goodbye kiss. I remind them that we're to go fishing this weekend; puts a smile on their face. Drive wife to metro. She spends the time in the car talking to her mother: can't grasp the molecular structure of light photons nor how those two can entertain each other by talking about curtains. Drop wife off; ask her if she'd like one of my special massages tonight. Puts a smile on her face. Deal with rush hour traffic. Keep thinking I should get one of those blow up dummies so I can drive in the express lane; conversation probably wouldn't drop off much.

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Morning and Afternoon: Get to morning meeting with boss and work group 10 minutes late. Should be okay 'cause I landed a new account yesterday. Boss still has to say, "glad you could join us Brad." What a *&^%-head. Back to bankruptcy fantasy. Ra-ra speech boring. Ted interrupts meeting when his forehead bangs off the table 'cause he nodded off; we all start to laugh but *&^%-head seems pissed. Get assignments for the day.

Our group gets the jobs done, plus a couple of things the *&^%-head didn't think of. Is Claire flirting with me? Bill asks if I'd like to golf on Sunday. Say I'd love to, but can't (guilt over not being with the family plus wife would use as a club in our next fight); I'm glad Bill doesn't get impatient with me. Ask him if he's free for a happy hour on Friday; puts a smile on his face. Get a call from new account with questions. Get those cleared up. Leaving 20 minutes late, but learning to accept slave status. Call wife to check in; our usual brief conversation. Pretty soon we'll be reduced to clicks and whistles.

Early Evening: Traffic is killer. Gotta remember to get some books on tape. Get home to smells of pasta filling the house. I ask what happened to the boys' karate class: wife says she had a bad day at work and was too tired to take 'em. She continues with a complaint that my mother got the boys to do their homework by bribing them with ice cream and that they still didn't get it done. I point out that she saves us thousands each year in nanny costs. Wife slams down pasta spoon and says that I always side with my mother against her. I give her space. Eldest boy tells me he finished his homework and asks if I want to shoot some baskets outside. I say maybe this weekend 'cause I'm too whipped now. Suggest he get his brother or a friend to play. Wife bellows "supper in 10!" I check email and confirm time of start of the Mets game. Wife hollers "dinner!" We eat a rare dinner together. Wife and youngest boy keep their eyes on their plates with eldest and I talk about our fishing trip this weekend. Ask youngest boy if anything is wrong. He starts tearing up and says that another boy at school called him "fat" and other kids laughed. I get the details but feel lost how to help. Wife says she'll call the principal but youngest begs her not to. Eldest says that if he didn't eat so much people wouldn't call him fat; they start arguing. I tell boys they're not allowed to open their lips except to insert food. Everyone finishes dinner. Tell boys to shower and get ready for bed. Wife asks if I can do dishes. Easier just to do them than to argue. Ignore boys arguing upstairs. Wife goes up; hear her voice above theirs.

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Late Evening: Can't bear watching Dodgers abuse Mets. Flip around TV watching 90 channels of nothing. Wife on the phone with her mother. Fall asleep. Wife wakes me up with word "bed"; she's already in her bed clothes. I check on boys. Get ready for bed. Wife has her back to me in bed. Set alarm for 5:45. Wife says, with her back still to me, "thanks for the massage." I curse to myself. I'm annoyed but I ask if I can make it up to her with a double massage tomorrow. She says sure, turns to me and kisses me goodnight. Ok, she's not mad at least. Did at least a little good today. Ask God to help me to do better tomorrow. Pass out.