

TIME FOR YOU!

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

“What? Time for me? That went out the window once I started having kids!”

Most parents feel they have barely enough time to fulfill the fundamentals, let alone think about having time for themselves. I remember when I had infants at home. If I could get one task done in the day I thought I had really achieved something. I don't know where the time went, but 'went' it did! Our daughter and son-in-law have had their lovely little 9 month-old boy from Korea for 4 days now and they are both already exhausted. His sleeping schedule means he is sleeping from about 6 a.m. till 2 p.m. and the rest is short sleeps. Needless to say between about 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. he is having a lovely time playing while bleary eyes watch and wish he would just go back to sleep. His bio clock is way out of kilter!

Once children come along, it seems that parent needs shrink to the size of a pea. The more children you have, the less time there is for you. It makes sense, after all, because there are only 24 hours in a day and that doesn't change. Yet, I can still distinctly recall a particular time when I had my second child. I was sitting on the couch with my son on my knee. My daughter was squeezing as close as she could beside me, when suddenly this thought came into my head. 'Wait a minute! I have to have time for me, too!'

We slide so easily into the role of taxi driver, cook, bottle washer, laundry maid, nurse, shopping cart and holder of the purse – in fact the provider of all things. Isn't that the parents' role? We believe the myth that truly great parents put all personal wants and needs aside for the sake of their children. I don't consider this to be healthy thinking. Families need to be balanced.

Forefront Families believes that a successful family is one that is God-centered, parent directed, family-oriented and outwardly focused. Nowhere in that statement does it imply that kids should rule or come first in everything. We believe that *each* family member should be given the opportunity to develop their own skills and abilities and ultimately discover their own destiny. We believe the parents' role is to be effective role models and to train their children to become productive, educated, caring adults and parents. Our kids learn from what they see us do, not just what we say. If we are leading a balanced life, and creating and achieving goals, they will learn from us. I am not saying that we should do our own thing to the detriment of the rest of the family. What I am saying is that each family member should have their needs met. If individuals are leading a balanced life then the family together is more likely to be balanced.

So what is a balanced life? It's one where there is a time for work, for play, for study, for sleep, for devotion to other family members and friends, AND a

time for self and spouse. It is vital to make time to nourish and replenish your own relationship on a regular basis. It might mean having someone look after the kids for the weekend so you can go and just have fun together. It is not only beneficial to you, but also good for the kids to be without you for a day or two. We have had weekly date nights for many years and we also go away for a weekend once a month now we have no children in the house. It is important to encourage one another to create or continue hobbies and interests and to go out with the guys or the girls on your own. The rich input and encouragement that others have given me has opened my eyes to opportunities I may never have realized.

Don't get stuck in isolation or in a work/home/work/home cycle. Remember your kids are learning from you. Do you want them to lead a similar life to you? If not, then live like you want them to. Do activities on your own, with your spouse and with your children. You *do* have family responsibilities, but as long as what you do is not upsetting the family balance, then it has got to be good for you now and in the long term. Look after you!

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.