

MODULE 5B

LIFE SKILLS SUPPORT GROUP

THE BALANCING ACT

HOME/WORK/SCHOOL

GOAL: This module is designed to help participants sort out the often times overwhelming task of balancing the needs of the family with employment or educational commitments.

OBJECTIVES: Participants will be able to:

- discuss concerns around the topic of employment or school
- label barriers such as time, childcare, and support
- list responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, transportation, and coordinating family schedules
- learn to delegate, organize and learn the value of staying flexible

MATERIALS: Handouts: Balancing Home, Work, and School, Organization and School, Organization and work, Helpful Tips For Home, Work and School



What do I cook tonight?

When is there time for

We don't want to go to school!

BALANCING HOME WORK AND SCHOOL

Mary is divorced with an eighteen-month-old toddler and two grade school children. She was excited to find a part time job at the college that she attended. She wants to get a certificate in medical billing. She has a very hectic schedule but manages to get by with the help of a sitter who takes care of the toddler. The most stressful time for Mary is her mornings. She feeds and prepares the children for school, and herself for work, and school. Her evenings are a close second, because she has to prepare meals, help with homework, and get them all bathed down and ready for the bed. Even though Mary feels exhausted from her busy day, she takes the quiet time in the evening to pay bills and study for her school assignment. She hopes to get enough sleep so that she won't be too tired to get up and get everyone off and on time.

If this sounds like Mary could use some help. You are right! Will she get it? That's another story. She feels fortunate to have a reliable baby sitter and she lives close to her children's school. They have to ride the bus. She has also applied for housing assistance and is looking forward to a bigger place.

Mary copes with her hectic schedule, but feels overwhelmed when the unexpected hits her tight schedule. For example, she receives a call from her fourth grader's teacher, saying her son is being disruptive in class and there needs to be a teacher-parent meeting. In that same week she has two exams that she cannot afford to miss, and her toddler has not been sleeping well. She has been fighting off a sore throat. Balancing the needs of home, work, school, and self can certainly be challenging! It is an on-going process, and without help and support, it may mean that something will go undone. In Mary's case, she rescheduled her meeting with the school, after her mother agreed to go see the teacher in her place. She took her exams because she was near the end of the semester, and she made a doctor's appointment to find out why she was feeling sick. She needed some help with chores and the children in the evening, and she was able to get a friend to come over twice a week to help her. It is not easy balancing such competing demands, the miracle is that so many parents continue to do it, and many are successful.

ORGANIZATION AND SCHOOL

Answering these questions will help you decide if you have developed good habits:

1. Do you have a set time for daily study?
2. Do you have a set place where you study?
3. Do you make regular deadlines?
4. Do you plan ahead without procrastination?
5. Do you write a daily list of things to do?
6. Do you record when assignments are due?
7. Does your work interfere with your study?
8. Are you easily distracted?
9. Do you let others know that you need quiet time?
10. Do you reward/praise yourself for completing your assignments?

ORGANIZATION AND WORK

- Write it down—make a list—don't rely upon memory
- Remember that not all listed tasks have to be done at the same time
- Look at your To Do List and prioritize the task that are high priority. Tasks that don't have to be completed immediately, remove from your list
- Decide what day you want to complete the tasks that are important but are not urgent
- Divide up your tasks into segments and work on each piece of the larger tasks until completed
- Make sure that your focused upon completing tasks that are necessary and that lead directly to your goal completion

HELPFUL TIPS FOR HOME WORK AND SCHOOL

Below are some helpful suggestions in efforts to balance needs of home, work, or school:

- Obtain trustworthy childcare
- Have a can-do spirit to look for creative solutions
- Seek help
- Delegate responsibilities
- Have a good emergency system in place where you can be reached
- Develop a good work relationship with at least one other person whom you trust
- Be open with bosses or teachers when your are getting overwhelmed. They may be able to make helpful suggestions
- Stay flexible. You may have to wait to finish a class, or you may have to take time off to see to the needs of children
- Things you cannot change, you have to let go. There is always tomorrow