

# PUBLICATION

---

## Health Tip – "Life Hacks" for Working Moms

Authors: Michelle Faye Zaltsberg

October 02, 2017

**I often recall with amusement how busy I used to think I was before I had my first child last year. In reality, I would spend free time having meals with friends, shopping for things I didn't really need and generally doing things I enjoyed, like cooking, catching up on TV and browsing titles of books I might read one day when I wasn't so "busy." These are activities I rarely have time for these days. Of course, I'm obligated to tell you that my daughter is worth every sacrifice (and it's true – she is!), but I would be lying if I said I didn't miss spending a little time on myself.**

The last year has been marked by trial and error as I've worked on ways to balance my responsibilities as a new mom with a hectic career, but also with my hobbies and interests that keep me personally fulfilled. Here are a few ways I've managed to re-incorporate into my life some of the things having a busy career and a toddler have forced me to give up:

**Improve efficiency by combining items on your to-do list.** I love to cook, but find it challenging (and unenjoyable) to race to get dinner on the table in the 90 minutes I have after I arrive home from daycare with my daughter and before her bedtime, in which I must also (with the help of my husband), eat the meal, clear the table, play with my daughter, bathe her, read to her and put her to bed. This leaves little time to make a meal that didn't come labeled with heating instructions. Similarly, keeping up with friends has been increasingly difficult as the demands of family life have taken over. To address these issues, once every few months, I invite a couple of girlfriends over on a Sunday for a marathon cooking session – we coordinate by email three or four freezer-friendly recipes that we plan to execute in bulk and then divide and conquer the shopping and cooking. Not only do we each end up with about a dozen family meals that reduce weekday dinner stress, but we also get to spend time together without feeling guilty for neglecting other items on our to-do lists.

**Don't squander your free time.** I have always been a news junkie. My car's satellite radio is preset only to news channels, and over the last year, given the current state of political discourse, the ride to work has only created anxiety for me. Indeed, by the end of my commute, I'm usually in deep existential thought, questioning the stability of the world order – not a recommended way to start the day. Recognizing that my consumption of this content was adding little value to my life, I've replaced it with one of the things I wish I had more time for – books. I now listen to audio books during my commute and often opt for fiction or memoirs by comedic writers. When I arrive at the office, I'm in a better headspace, having replaced a stressor with a de-stressor. As an added bonus, traffic jams can be serendipitous when you're listening to a real page-turner.

**Ask yourself, "Can it air dry?"** When I was in law school, I often made trips to South Florida to visit my grandparents. I recall one instance when my grandmother, who was suffering from health problems, received an in-home visit from a nurse who was explaining to her ways to avoid too much physical exertion. As they were standing in the kitchen talking, my grandmother picked up a towel and began to dry some dishes that had just been washed. The nurse stopped her and said, "Let the air do that for you. Take a rest. When you come back, they will be dry." My grandmother did not appreciate the instruction (she had her way of doing things), but for some reason, the simple concept of eliminating an unnecessary step struck me, and I've always remembered that advice. So, I ask myself (sometimes metaphorically, and sometimes, it's really about the dishes), can whatever I'm spending my time doing instead of what I actually want to do be set out to "air dry?"

Often, the answer is to just let it go and take a rest. Whatever it is will still be there after I catch the nightly news.