



Balancing work and family *during the school holidays*

August

For many parents and carers, the summer holidays are one of the most anticipated times of the year. The prospect of spending more time with children, enjoying family activities and taking a break from the usual school routine can be incredibly rewarding. However, for those who are also juggling work commitments, the reality can sometimes feel rather different.

Managing work deadlines, meetings and everyday responsibilities alongside childcare, family activities and household tasks can create significant pressure. If you've found yourself feeling stretched during the school holidays, you're certainly not alone.

The good news is that while the holidays may be busy, there are practical ways to make the experience feel more manageable while protecting both your wellbeing and that of your family.

Accept that it's a balancing act

One of the biggest challenges during the school holidays is the feeling that you're expected to do everything perfectly.

Many parents feel pressure to be productive at work, provide engaging experiences for their children, keep the house running smoothly and somehow still find time to look after themselves. When combined, these expectations can quickly become overwhelming.

It's important to recognise that balance doesn't mean giving equal attention to everything at all times. Some days work will take priority.

On other days, family commitments will come first.

Rather than aiming for perfection, focus on what is realistic. Giving yourself permission to be flexible can reduce stress and help you approach challenges with a calmer mindset.



Let go of holiday perfection

Social media can sometimes create the impression that summer holidays should be packed with exciting days out, crafts, activities and memorable experiences.

The reality is often much simpler.

Children don't need constant entertainment, nor do they expect every day to be extraordinary. Often, spending quality time together, sharing meals, visiting a local park or enjoying simple activities creates the moments they remember most. Trying to create the perfect holiday can be exhausting.



Create some structure

Although holidays naturally involve a more relaxed schedule, maintaining some structure can benefit both adults and children.

Without routine, days can quickly feel chaotic, particularly when work responsibilities need to fit around family life.

A flexible framework might include:

- **Consistent wake-up and bedtime routines**
- **Planned meal times**
- **Dedicated periods for work**
- **Outdoor activities or exercise**
- **Time for independent play**
- **Opportunities to relax and unwind**

Having a predictable rhythm to the day can help reduce stress and make it easier to manage expectations.

Communicate openly

Clear communication can make a huge difference during busy periods.

If you're working while caring for children, be open with colleagues and managers about any challenges you may be facing. Most workplaces recognise that the school holidays can create additional pressures for parents and carers.

Similarly, discussing plans and responsibilities with partners, family members or support networks can help spread the load more evenly.

You don't need to manage everything alone. Asking for support is often a sign of good planning rather than weakness.

Prioritise your own wellbeing

When life becomes busy, self-care is often the first thing to disappear from the diary. Unfortunately, neglecting your own wellbeing can make it harder to cope with competing demands over time.

Even small moments of self-care can have a positive impact. This might involve:

- **Taking a short walk during the day**
- **Finding time for exercise**
- **Reading a book**
- **Enjoying a quiet coffee before the household wakes up**
- **Spending time with friends**
- **Practising mindfulness or relaxation techniques**

Looking after your own wellbeing helps ensure you have the energy and resilience needed to support others.

Manage feelings of guilt

Many working parents experience feelings of guilt during the summer holidays.

You may feel guilty when you're working instead of spending time with your children, or guilty when family commitments mean work is not receiving your full attention.

These feelings are incredibly common, but they can also be unhelpful.

It's worth remembering that children benefit from seeing positive role models who balance responsibilities, solve problems and manage commitments.

They don't need perfect parents. They need caring, supportive adults who do their best.

Focusing on the quality of the time you spend together rather than the quantity can help reduce unnecessary pressure.

Remember that the holidays are temporary

When you're in the middle of a particularly busy week, it can sometimes feel as though the school holidays will never end. In reality, this period is temporary.

Some days will go smoothly while others may feel challenging. That's entirely normal.

By being realistic about expectations, maintaining some structure, accepting support and protecting your own wellbeing, it's possible to navigate the summer holidays more successfully.

The goal is not to create a perfect summer. It's to find a balance that works for your family while ensuring your own health and wellbeing remain a priority.



