

# Are your workaholic habits destroying your relationship with your kids?

My mission in life as a former single mom is to help all working parents to understand that parenting is not about money and it's not a popularity contest, it's about growing self-confident, responsible, and mostly successful adults.

I was a single mom of two for approximately 14 years while working full time with zero family or supportive friends nearby. I did it on a shoe-string budget, very little sleep, and a helluva lot of prayers. No, I'm not sub-human, but many have noticed that I was always yawning and napping on my lunch breaks.

## So what does a "Workaholic" look like?

A stressed-out mess, right? LOL! But seriously,

- How many of you work nine – ten hour days most days?
- How many of you bring work home every single night? Or even over the weekends and end up by working one or two days almost every single weekend a month?
- How many of you are checking and replying to your email on your smart phone 24/7?
- Do you have high blood pressure?
- Do you carry around an extra ten-plus pounds?

Ok, ok those last two can apply to everyone, workaholic or not, LOL!!!

Anyway, if you answer yes to at least one of the first three questions, then you are borderline workaholic but you aren't so far gone that you can't be saved.

If you answer yes to two or more of the first three questions, yes, admit it, you are workaholic: you need help now!

And if you answer yes to all five questions, you might consider another line of work or a live-in helper! Ha, ha, ha!



## Why Is This a Big Deal?

Three reasons:

**First**, if you are too busy to really pay attention, your kids could be teenagers before you realize there's a problem.

And **second**, the most important reason: There are no Do-Overs when it comes to raising your kids. It's not like if you miss their first birthday or their first day of school, you can go back and try again. Once these life-changing milestones pass you by, they are gone.

**Lastly**, contrary to that old saying, "kids are so resilient," they are not. Take a look at the news and notice how many people are dealing with depression, thoughts of suicide, self-medicating with drugs and alcohol, and picking up guns and shooting classmates. The number of people on a first name basis with their counselor is crazy! I'll tell you what, if you want some job security, become a psychiatrist or prison guard.

Does this tell you that kids are resilient? Ha!

## There are a gazillion of hard workers/ workaholics/ entrepreneurs out there who do just that and they have wonderful lives, don't you think?

What I think is that their lives aren't as wonderful and beautiful as the *perception* that they are. Dressing nice and driving a Mercedes doesn't mean that life is rosy on the home front.

If you think about it, the issue of the hard-working father/ mother has been depicted in movies for as long as I can remember...husbands missing dinner, kids events, or just missing. Since I'm writing this in December, I can think of a couple Christmas themed movies that illustrate this point: Elf and The Santa Claus.

If you are living in a cave and don't know those movies, here are a few more you might recognize:

**"Liar, Liar"** with Jim Carey, he was always missing his son's events because of work and lying about it although it was usually work-related.

**"Jungle to Jungle"** with Tim Allen, speaking of an absent Dad!



Harrison Ford in “**Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade**”...too busy didn’t even know he had a son (played by Shia LeBeouf).

In the original “**Star Wars**,” Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker had some real issues...Luke didn’t know who his real father was...yeah the guy was out pursuing his dream of destroying the world. Then they finally have their quick reunion in “**The Empire Strikes Back**” *and Luke loses a hand. that one is number one on the Rolling Stone list of worst movie fathers!*)

There’s even a famous song by Harry Chapin, called **Cat’s in the Cradle**. Check out these lyrics:

My child arrived just the other day  
He came to the world in the usual way  
But there were planes to catch and bills to pay  
He learned to walk while I was away  
And he was talkin' 'fore I knew it, and as he grew  
He'd say "I'm gonna be like you, Dad  
You know I'm gonna be like you"

[\(Click to view the entire lyric\)](#)

Many real-life fathers and mothers seem to really believe that their kids or spouses would rather have the money and stuff you can buy for them, over spending *time* with them. And it’s just not true.

## **So is Hard Work a Bad Thing?**

No I’m not saying that at all.

Those of you who know me personally know that I worked my ass off for many years as a single parent to keep a roof over my kids’ heads, food on the table and a fairly clean house.. And that’s not unreasonable. But, what *I did not do was ignore them or what was going on in their world.*

## **No One Plans on Ignoring Their Kids: How Does This Problem Start?**

Many people such as yourself (and me too) get an idea for a business and are passionate and excited about it. So much so that we go at it full speed and barely make time to sleep or eat.



Even if its “just” a full-time job, many of us get caught up in the excitement of the task at hand and slowly start working late...first one day a week, but eventually it works up to every day of the week, and then we start bringing work home. Before we know it, we’re working 10 or more hours a day, and 6-7 days a week! We also get this stupid idea in our heads that if we don’t, the office will fall apart without us and the world will end.

Hmmmm...sound familiar?

This is ok if it’s just you and maybe a significant other but, sadly, if you have a family, well, too often those you love the most get left in the dust...and you slowly start to lose sight of what’s important.

Also many of you will justify your actions with comments such as, “I do this for you, honey,” or “for our family,” and “when this one project is done,” or “when the business is up and running we’ll have all the money in the world and we can then have anything we want, and life will be just wonderful!”

The problem is that while this is all happening, your kids and wife – if they’re not helping – are left on their own...they never see you or interact with you: You all become roommates for a few years...or however long it takes to get the business “up and running.”

## Here Are Some Signs That Things Aren’t So Wonderful At Home

Let’s start with a new baby. Suppose you have a brand new baby in the midst of starting a new job. We all know how fast they grow...well, some of us do...and they’re really only babies for about two years. Do you know that that’s when all the cool developmental things happen?

You know

- Their first BM (LOL!),
- The first time they hold their head up,
- The first time they rolling over,
- Begin crawling,
- Take their first steps,
- Say their first words.

Did you miss any of those milestones? Guess what? That’s it, you missed them and there are no do-over’s! Think about how that makes you feel.



These first few months are also when your baby starts to recognize you and your voice. That's why most first words are Mama or Dada. What was your baby's first word?

Babies also learn at a very young age who they can depend on for food, clothing, warmth and comfort when they're sick. Was, or is, your baby crying all the time?

Or suppose your child is going through puberty? Do you want them to be talking to their friends about sex? Wouldn't you rather he/she hears the facts from you?

Listen, Mom or Dad, if you miss just these first couple years you're going to start noticing these really fun (*not*) behaviors as they get to be toddlers and then school age:

- Violence in the form of hitting or throwing things
- Talking back
- Refusing to follow your direction / not doing what they're told
- Ignoring rules such as chores, curfews, checking in, etc...

Their behavior will eventually escalate to stealing, being destructive, and sometimes they turn in on themselves. You may also see various signs of depression such as becoming more anti-social, self-harm such as cutting, or excessive use of drugs or alcohol, or even suicide.

Would you be surprised to know that ALL of these behaviors are done to get *your* attention (good or bad) and ultimately your love and approval? Google it, it's true!

It might not seem like such a big deal with toddlers but when these kids get into grade school it's gonna cause problems in school as well as at home. And just imagine this behavior from a 15-year-old!

That's some serious stuff!

## **What can you do as a workaholic who really is just trying to create a better life for your family?**

First, I suggest all parents get your sh\* together and review your priorities sooner rather than later because remember, with kids **there are no do-overs!** It's not like your kids will just stay 10 years old until you decide they're important and you have time for them. I mean really, how much "better" will your life be if your kids are stoned all the time and flunking out of school?



Note: One good way to start is to learn to manage your time better at work. Here's a great reference written by my friend, [Dr. Vicki Halsey - Hamster Revolution](#)

Once you've got your head on straight with that, I encourage you to open your minds and hearts to these Seven "Must Do's for Expressing Your Love." And yes, I'd say they are listed in order of importance.

## Jan's Seven Must Do's for Expressing Your Love

### 1. Spend TIME with your kids.

Notice this is number one on my list. That's because it's the most important for kids, as well as adults in any relationship. Now, most people would say that's the problem, *no time*. Well, you'll be happy to hear that all you need is one good quality hour a day! Seriously!

#### **TIME was my "secret sauce" for raising my kids!**

Yes, I understand when you're up at the crack of dawn getting breakfast and kids dressed, then running off to daycare or school, no, there's no time really to have any *quality time*. I get that. But you do have the evenings:

I had to pick up my kids from daycare (or afterschool care when they got older) by 6 pm or I'd be charged \$5 for every minute I was late. But I still had to fix dinner and deal with homework. There's your time: while I was fixing dinner the kids were in the kitchen with me usually talking my ear off. (I wouldn't let them go out and play while I was doing this because it would take too long to round them up again.) Then every dinner we **sat at the table and continued to talk.**

**Did you get that?** In the kitchen, talking and listening to each other, and then at the TABLE! Every, single night!



## 2. Show affection with your kids: HUGS, kisses and holding hands.

Hugs give everyone a sense of security that can never be taken away. It's the best way to let your children know that you love them and are there for them even when times are tough. *Kids need to know this.*

There are quite a few opportunities in a day when you can make that physical connection with them:

- Pick your baby/child up and wrap your arms around her when she falls down.
- Hold your baby's hand during those first few steps and keep on doing it every time you walk together.
- Give him a hug when you see the awful look of disappointment on his face when he doesn't get an "A" on that report (for which he worked so hard).
- Whenever you and your kids are walking together, hold hands or wrap your arms around each other's waists.
- Make sure your kids hold hands with each other, too. Hey, you're all part of the same family!
- Kiss the "owie" on her knee while holding her hand.

***You can show and tell your kids how much you love them every minute of every day.***

If you start the "hug habit" when your babies are newborns, it'll be so easy and so natural to continue it with them through their toddling years, their adolescent years, their teenage years (even when many kids think they're "too cool" to be seen with Mom), all the way up to adulthood.



### 3. LISTEN to your kids.

God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. Even if they barely know two words and the rest is just garble, be quiet and listen. Kids at every age truly believe they're saying something important. At least it's important to them. I know weird, but it's true. So, even if you don't understand a word they're saying...

- Look at them when they talk or attempt to talk. Your kids are watching your facial expressions, that's how they know you are listening.
- Respond to them when they talk...one word or sound works: "Hmmm, "yes," "no," "that's interesting," is probably all you need with babies and toddlers.
- Adolescents and teens usually only want a "sounding board," so one-word responses usually suffice. However, and only when asked, you've got to be prepared to offer your opinions and advice.
- So listen to your kids when they tell you about that fascinating beetle they found on the way home from school.
- And listen while your son or daughter talks and cries about the "owie" in their heart because they just got their feelings hurt by a friend.

More importantly, listen to them when they talk about their friends, other kids or teachers. This is what gives you a clue as to what's going on in their lives, how they feel about it and how it affects their world outside your home.

This is such an important part of raising kids, that I've addressed it a few times in the book: Check out the section about when you might be able to do this on page 66 and then "Listening Skills" on page 69 for more help.

#### **Keep your mouth shut:**

- Don't interrupt. I like the 3-second rule: This means when someone finishes talking, pause for three seconds. This gives them the opportunity to keep talking if they haven't yet completed a thought and it gives *you* time to think about what you might say as well as what effect it might have on the conversation. Keeping your kids talking is a good idea because the more they talk, the more you find out about your child and what's going on in his or her life.
- Don't direct the entire conversation by sharing your similar stories (from "when you were a kid" because they really don't care).





- Don't quiz them.
- Don't hand out advice if they don't ask for it.
- Don't share what they tell you with your friends and relatives.
- And whatever you do, *don't judge them!*

#### 4. Set and enforce BOUNDARIES and RULES.

I know this sounds kind of weird, but really, this shows that you care about your kids' behavior, health and welfare. Also, you are teaching them how they will be expected to act when they are teenagers and eventually grownups. So to begin,

- Don't ever assume your kids know what you mean or expect of them. Explain or show them exactly what you expect them to do and how to do it if they look at you like you have four heads. (This is kind of like dealing with grownups too, right?)
- Yes, you will have to tell them a thousand times! Get over it!
- Set and enforce bedtimes because that leads to enforcing curfews. Kids need sleep and so do you so you all can function the next day. C'mon, you must know that this becomes a safety issue too, right? Surely you don't want your 14-year-old daughter arguing about staying out till 11pm on a school night, do you? (*I mean, the mall is closed so where would she want to go at that hour anyway?*) Not to mention the fight it'll take to wake her up at the crack of dawn the next morning.
- Teach your little ones to sit on chairs at the dinner table; standing up and screaming shouldn't be acceptable in any situation. It's annoying and dangerous if they fall. Besides, you don't want your kids to be "those kids" who are climbing on furniture in public or at a friend's house when they're 15 do you?
- Assign them age-appropriate household chores as soon as they can walk. That might be putting their toys in a toy box every night, taking things to the trash can for you, or helping you to push the buttons to start the washing machine or the dishwasher. As they get older you can show them how to sort laundry or load the dishwasher.



- Remind them as to when these things need to be done: Put toys away every night before bedtime, trash to be put in can immediately, laundry is done on Wednesdays, dishes immediately after dinner, etc.
- PRAISE them when they help. Even if they do something a bit wrong. (More on that in Must Do #7, below.) I admit it, housework sucks. But that's why you need to start your kids on some of this stuff at a really early age while they still think it's fun to "help mom." Your praise is what's going to keep them doing these things as they grow up because they will eventually take pride in their own good work.

The other bonus is that your kids will know what it means to pick up after themselves, make their bed, do their own laundry and wash their own dishes when they finally decide to move out and live on their own. Pretty clever don't you think?

- If you don't like cursing in your household, tell them which words are acceptable to use or not use. I'm sure you can imagine how this one can bite you in the butt when they get to school.

## 5. PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

### Aka, Set a good example of what good behavior looks like.

The easiest way to enforce your rules and boundaries mentioned above is for everyone to follow the same exact rules. I think we all know that our kids are little parrots because YouTube is full of funny kid videos. So you know where they learn this stuff, right? Set them up for good behavior and therefore success down the road by watching your own behavior.

## 6. TELL your kids, as often as you possibly can, how much you love them.

Ken Blanchard always says, "*Keep your 'I love yous up to date!*"

This is a good plan for everyone in your life! Here are some opportunities where you can do that:

- Each time you part ways for the day (daycare, school, work, drugstore runs), exchange hugs and "*I love yous.*"



- Greet each other every day when you wake up with a "Good morning, sweetheart/honey (or whatever rolls off your tongue), I love you so much!"
- Each night when you go to bed, tuck your babies in with a hug and a kiss and an "I love you. "
- Say "I love you" each time you finish a phone call with them. (I still do that with both my grown kids even though my son still doesn't say it back: I'm still the mom so it's my "job.")
- Or say it just because you feel it any time of the day or night.

## 7. Use Positive Reinforcement and PRAISE.

Remember those boundaries and rules in Must Do #4? When your children are still toddlers they are just beginning to learn so most things they attempt to help you with are going to be, shall I say, less than perfect? Regardless, you need to encourage them with some praise because if you don't, asking for their help will be a nightmare. So,

- When they do help even when the outcome is less than perfect, thank them for their help.
- When they help and it's all good, thank them and praise them for a job well done.
- Tell your kids that you're proud of them on a regular basis.
- Tell them that they're great kids and you really enjoy being with them.

Well, what do you think? Did you come up with a few ideas of your own?

I think if you start when your babies are born this type of behavior will just become your new "normal" thus making your life and your household whole lot happier. So you should,

- Continue through their terrible two's (which is probably one of the most trying times of your life);
- Through their adolescence;



- On through their teen years (when they say they don't need it, but this is when they really need it the most );
- All the way through to their young adult years;
- And then, it might end with your last breath.

If you do all these things, especially spend time with them, love them and listen to them, then you will learn a few things about your kids. As a matter of fact here are some of the things you should know about your kids:

- Their friends
- Their friends' parent's names, ph#, and where they live
- Your kids' hobbies
- All their favorites: color, foods (or least favorite foods), clothes, TV shows, places to go
- What they want to be when they grow up

**Ask yourself: Do YOU know any of these things about your kids and their world?**

One of the most important things you will gain from these behaviors is your kid's trust and respect for you. Don't worry, your kids will always love you, but this is what will make them *like* you.

Remember, with kids, they will grow older whether you have time for them or not...and it's up to you if you want to be a part of that.

**Again, THERE ARE NO DO OVER'S so think about it, and be honest with yourself:**

- Are you a workaholic?
- Can you see that your kids are displaying some crappy behaviors at home?
- Can you think of some ways you can organize your time at work a little better so you can make that hour or two in the evenings with your family?

Your family already knows how important their relationship with you is, you are the one who needs to figure this out!



Sincerely,

Jan

