

# Coming Home: Making the Transition

Do you ever feel as if you are leading a double life? Are your responsibilities at work and at home totally different? If your answer is yes, you are not alone. At no other time is that change so keenly felt as the transition you experience between your work and home environment at the end of the work day. This time of day has been called the whirlwind hour.

Transitions are times of change. Often during these times our bodies are at the right place at the right time, but our minds are not. Our minds have not made the transition yet and are still trying to catch up.

As your family returns home, everyone has a special need that should be met. These needs often lead families down a collision course that leads to increased stress and emotional outbreaks. It is important to negotiate these delicate day-to-day demands and not get knocked down in the struggle. The challenge is to make it through the collision course with as little damage as possible.

The more time you have to make transitions, the easier it will be. A hurried transition is always hard. Think of the times that you're late to pick up the children or meet another family obligation. You are upset, you are angry, and you are under stress to hurry, hurry, hurry and get it done. When other family members know that you are under stress, they may become irritated, too. Here are some tips to help relieve hurry-up-itis.

## *Transition Tips*

1. Learn to manage your time so that you have completed your tasks and can leave work at the appointed hour.
2. Plan some catch-up time at work so that if something unexpected happens, you'll have the time to deal with it.
3. Be assertive. If your boss is always making demands at the end of the day, tell your boss tactfully that the work day has ended and that you'll be pleased to complete the task in the morning. There may be a legitimate emergency sometime, but it should not be a daily occurrence.
4. Learn to separate your personal and work lives. Don't take your personal life to work and don't take your work home.

When families reassemble at home, anything can happen. Here are a few of the demands that families are facing:

- The family is hungry. It has been 5 to 6 hours since the last meal.
- Family members may vent their frustrations after a particularly frustrating day. It is safe to fall apart at home.
- Household tasks need to be done: open mail, change clothes, start dinner, or throw in a load of wash.

## How To Make Transitions

### *Commuting Time*

The time it takes to get from work to home can be very helpful in making the transition. Some people use this time to finish thinking about what's been happening at work and to shift gears and make plans for responsibilities at home. When they get home, they are mentally organized to get started. Others use commuting time to listen to music or read a book. This time can be devoted to a pleasant activity without feeling guilty about home or work demands.



### *Helping Each Other*

It is important for couples to help one another make the transition from work to home. Good communication is important between couples about what needs to be done and who needs to do it. There are no hard and fast rules about who and what should be done. An open discussion will help each spouse understand the other person's roles and feelings. Children can also be given tasks that will help the family accomplish what needs to be done in a relatively short time. This sharing of tasks not only teaches children responsibility but also gives them a sense of belonging. Small children are often tired when they get home. A nap at this time will improve the child's disposition and give the parents time to do what needs to be done.

### *Changing Clothes*

The simple act of changing clothes can make the transition from work to home easier. A different set of clothes can make you feel like you're finally home. Work and home often require different roles and behaviors. Being dressed for the job at hand makes the transition complete.

### *A Quick Snack*

A nutritious snack will help relieve family members' hunger. With a little planning, this snack could be the first course of your dinner: salad, soup, crackers, and cheese. This snack will give you extra time to prepare a nutritious meal.

**“It is important to make time in your life for your family, hobbies, and civic concerns, just as it is important to work at work.”**