

Handling Multiple Roles in the Face of Covid-19

Our roles associated with our personal lives usually don't mix with our professional roles. So what happens when we find ourselves in situations that confuse and mix these roles? Furthermore, what happens when those roles are ones we would normally have in separate environments?

With the onset of Covid-19 and restrictions on social distancing, there are many of us who have found ourselves in this situation. Merging the world of work, school, and home together while trying to find a way to cope. How do we adapt? Is it ok to drop something from your plate in place of something else? Yes! It is ok to not be superman or superwoman. This is, *self-care* and is very important when tackling multiple roles.

The reality is that some days there will be more tasks to complete than time to complete them. Think about creating a list of tasks you have for each role. When going over this list, take a moment to prioritize each. These will likely change as demands change. You may have a demanding project for work one week or your child may have a series of school projects the next. Set your goals for the day based on task importance.

When we try to take on too many tasks at once, we put ourselves in a position to become overworked and overwhelmed. It builds stress as we race against time to complete what may very well be impossible. This stress can make us less productive, causing anxiety and mood changes. This is why it is important to prioritize and be flexible as demands change.

Working from home and multi-tasking can be challenging and confusing for you and your children. Try to separate work duties. Set up a work space in a bedroom or a spare area in your home. Discuss this space with your children to set a boundary for your time there. It may be difficult to not respond to your child when you are trying to get work done. Be proactive by setting your child up with an activity or task they are capable of doing independently.

You may also add a visual timer to your task. For some people, timed pressure helps get the work done. A timer can also be an indicator to your child of how much time is left before you will be able to attend to them. This will be a new concept, so remember to be patient if at first your child continues to come to you. Give gentle reminders and redirect them back to their activity, or when possible to another adult in your home.

For homes with more than one adult taking turns being the 'go to' person for the children can help decrease the stress of fulfilling multiple roles. You can determine which adult should take which day, and/or time frame based on your respective priority lists. This in turn allows the children to be taken care of and the adults to be a little more productive in their tasks.

Let's wrap up with a little talk about communication. I recently came across a quote; 'We are all in the same storm, but we are not in the same boat'. This was a gentle reminder for me, that although Covid-19 is raging around us all, we are not all affected the same. I say this, to remind you that what is not spoken, is not known. Communicate with your employer, let them know what new roles you have taken on. Do not be afraid to ask if you may be able to flex your working hours to accommodate getting things done. The same with your child's teacher. Check in to see if it is possible to get assignments ahead so you can work on a schedule for your child. Or if they may have flexibility on assignment due dates.

All in all, we are all in the same storm. It is vital that we communicate and support one another. But also take care of ourselves physically and mentally. I hope these tips are helpful as you navigate our temporary new normal. I will leave you with the quote below as you continue your journey.

“Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”
Francis of Assisi

Resources:

Christine M. Riordan, October 3, 2013. “How to Juggle Multiple Roles”.
<https://hbr.org/2013/10/how-to-juggle-multiple-roles>

*We’re in the Same Storm but Not All in the Same Boat: A Mother’s Day Like No Other:
<https://www.momsrising.org/blog/were-in-the-same-storm-but-not-all-in-the-same-boat-a-mothers-day-like-no-other>

Hilary Hutchinson, October 1, 2018. “Tips for Juggling Multiple Roles in your Family, Work, and School”.
<https://www.transitioningyourlife.com/tips-for-juggling-multiple-roles-in-family-work-and-school/>

Josipa Milicevic. Managing multiple roles - Family Commitments
<https://parentingcaring.weebly.com/managing-multiple-roles.html>

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