

Getting Work Done . . .

EVEN WITH DISTRACTIONS FROM HOME



Your teenage daughter calls you at work. She's sobbing uncontrollably. Her favorite sweater is at the cleaners and she can't get it back in time for a date tonight! What do you say to her?

Children and elderly dependents can require a large amount of your time. Obviously you can't bring children or your elderly parent to your office every day. But there are more practical ways of dealing with distractions from home.

WHAT IS REASONABLE?

Both parents and children will be happier in the long run if children assume responsibility for their own behavior within carefully defined limits. Once you've set standards for your dependents and yourself, stick to them. As a parent you have a right to be assertive with your kids without being harsh.

You needn't beg, plead or bargain with your children or let an elderly dependent take advantage of you. Your firmness, consistency and posi-

tive treatment of family members can keep the burdens of your personal life from bothering you on the job. For instance, frequent, lengthy personal phone calls may not be necessary. One two-minute call per day should be sufficient.

Sometimes a problem at home still takes valuable time from your work. If you are permitted to take work home, work late, come in early or work on weekends to make up for lost time, make the most of the arrangement. After all, as long as you've committed yourself to your job, you've accepted the responsibility to get your work done, one way or another.

MINIMIZING DISTRACTIONS ON THE JOB

A child, relative or sitter won't need to call you at work if you've arranged for "the unexpected" already. Have a backup plan in place. And draw up your own phone list so that you'll have someone at your fingertips who knows what to do as soon as you call.

You can minimize the "surprises" that are unique to your family by thinking ahead. If school is let out early or your child gets sick at school, do you want your child to go to the house of a neighbor or nearby relative until you get home? If your children get into a fight, do they know not to call you to referee and that you'll help negotiate a settlement when you get home? If someone steals their lunch, do they have enough money to buy lunch in the school cafeteria? Where's a spare house key in case your dependent parent's key is lost?

IS IT A REAL EMERGENCY?

If a call from home seems to be a legitimate emergency, stay calm and



ask lots of questions about what happened. Use another office phone to call 9-1-1. Unless it's a fire emergency, keep the family member on the line until the emergency response team arrives. Give any first-aid suggestions you can and see if you can orchestrate a plan of action from your office.

Beware of false emergencies. They can needlessly jeopardize your work. Make sure your children realize what a real emergency is and how they can handle lesser problems themselves or wait until you get home. For example, what should they do if the dog runs away, but they are not supposed to leave the house? And a call about clothing selections or dinner plans can be prevented by planning the next day's wardrobe and menus ahead of time.

Having a plan of action before it's needed—whether for emergencies or minor problems—should give you and your dependents peace of mind and let your work day flow without distractions from home.

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