



# Practical Parenting

## WORKING PARENTS

117

### KEY POINTS

#### PROGRAM SUMMARY

Show host Polly Gonzalez asserts that it's possible to work out accommodations to ensure a happy family life even though both parents work outside the home. But lots of pre-thinking and pre-planning related to the ongoing, ever-changing needs of the children in the family is a "must." Successfully developing a pleasant, satisfying family routine that allows for all the family members' needs requires a schedule that each one understands, and that all who are old enough **contribute** to, **commit** to, and **communicate** about – regularly!

#### MAJOR MESSAGE

The most important thing parents must do if both plan to work outside the home (or even if one or the other intends to work from home on a usual "8-hour" basis daily) is to consider what child-care needs must be decided: for a young child, a nanny? nursery school? And for older children: special after-school programs? "latch-key" arrangements? Whatever the arrangement, the parents must seriously think through the choices, "imagine" the care-giving situation through their child's eyes, and carefully prepare their toddler or school-age child for the child-care arrangement. Whatever the final choice, parent's personal, careful examination of the selected care-giving facility and/or caregiver(s) should have preceded making the arrangement.

Working parents are faced with an unusually-complex task of juggling schedules and "who will do **what**, and **when**." Confusion can be reduced when

- (1) **everyone concerned is involved** in the scheduling,
- (2) **the schedule and any problems** arising therefrom **are discussed and resolved** in frequent and companionable "family council" meetings; and
- (3) **everyone approaches** the ongoing demands of **their lifestyle** in a **positive, optimistic** manner – with the parents leading the way.

For younger children, arrangements for day care must be thoughtfully decided on. Placing a child in a day-care center or in a small-group situation in someone's home should be preceded by "inspection visits" by one or both parents. Be concerned about the following items and others important to **you**.

- (1) Is the place safe, secure, clean? Look everywhere.
- (2) Observe the caregivers. Is the "feel" of the people and place comfortable?
- (3) Listen to the participating children. Do they seem content, overall?
- (4) Ask about the daily routine – playing, learning, guiding, eating, napping, etc.
- (5) Talk to other parents if possible.

After enrollment, confer frequently with your child and with caregivers at the site; some concerns and tips follow:

- (1) Before entering childcare, older youngsters should know
  - a. their full name, address, and phone **number**;
  - b. mother and father's full name,
  - c. home and work **number's** for both parents.
- (2) Is your child apparently happy and content upon return home, or frequently disturbed, aggressive, sad, moody?
- (3) Are there frequent bruises, scratches, "bo-bo's"?
- (4) Drop in, **unexpectedly**, at the school sometimes, and other times by appointment.
- (5) Try to secure frequent, friendly exchanges of information with several of the caregivers at the facility concerning your child's development and progress in the childcare situation.



If parents decide children are old enough to become "latch key children" (home alone) it's best to set up and post basic rules that include the following:

- (1) What the child (children) **can** and **can't do** during their time alone.
- (2) How to be safe (how/when to call 911; access to a phone list of people to call in emergencies, such as willing neighbors or relatives; the nature of possible problems that might occur, with suggested solutions; not opening the door to strangers, etc. Parents should discuss an array of "problem possibilities" and **role-play** what might be done in each case ... **actually acting out** short "**emergency episodes**," pretending they're real, is strongly advised).

*Note: **Parents and children together** should establish the "latch-key" rules, then discuss and adjust them as a regular ongoing activity, day by day.*

Last, though not least, **parents must plan** and schedule a bit of "**time alone**" for their own fun and relaxation: parents who are a good relaxed, working "duet" have the best chance of running a "happy" household that features working parents **plus** one or more kids of one or more ages.

### WHILE VIEWING

As you view the program, watch for the **one** suggestion made to working parents that seems the **most important one of all**, in your opinion.

### REFLECTIONS

After viewing the program, take a few moments to think about working parents who put all of this program's basic "good advice" into action before putting a young child in childcare (and continuously during the child's time in childcare), versus parents who put a child in childcare without such pre-thinking, pre-planning, and continuous checking on the child's adjustment.

Will the first couple's child benefit as much as the second couple's child from the childcare experience? Why so, or why not? Discuss your answer with a group or a friend.

