



Baby 'N Me

Power Hour

Nine Steps to Conquering the Power Hour

By Barbara Stein

1. Make a schedule of who arrives home when. Take into account days when late meetings, health club visits, doctor's appointments, and such demand that you be especially flexible.
2. Keep a running list of chores that must be accomplished and negotiate a trade-off system with your mate. Dinner, light housework, bath time, and evening dishes may be a few of the chores that will appear on your list.
3. "Check-in" with your family as a whole before members begin to scatter. Help reduce competition by briefly sharing the day's events, and *listen* while others do the same. This period gives everyone a chance to test the waters and determine stress levels, fatigue, and general coping ability.
4. Examine your and your spouse's expectations. Are they realistic? How similar are they? Consider what other family members expect, and meet on neutral ground. Remember, your moods and behaviors when you return home affect the entire family.
5. Be flexible. If a neighbor or friend drops in for a surprise visit at this time of day, or if you and your mate are particularly tired, roll with the punches and make spontaneous changes. Trade routines. You can even the score later.
6. Make a pact to keep "power hour" conversations low-key and free of hot issues. If a sore point comes up, agree to table the discussion until you're more relaxed and the children are tucked in for the night. This will help smooth out the problem in an atmosphere less emotionally charged.
7. Sensitize yourself to seasonal moods and changes. During the summer months, for example, moods are likely to be more carefree and routine chores are pushed later into the evening as families spend more time outdoors. On the other hand, the winter months may cause unpredictable hardships. A broken furnace or hazardous driving conditions can try anyone's patience.
8. Review your plan every few months. Look at your schedule and see if any major changes have occurred that affects the family. Moving, a new baby, changed work schedules can all turn your plan topsy-turvy. Revise your plan if necessary.
9. Above all, don't panic if you lose control. Nobody's perfect!

*Excerpted from Growing Parent, January 1983
by Barbara Stein who is a speech pathologist
and California-based freelance writer.*