

I'm Walking in the Door Stressed!

“I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.”

--Henry David Thoreau

As I came through the door after a challenging day of work, the tornado began. “Daddy’s home!” My kids wanted to share their day and their artwork, and my wife wanted to share how difficult her day had been.

I wanted to lie down on the couch and be left alone.

And this same scenario is happening all over the country with fathers (or mothers) and their families. Families are converging on each other at the end of the day with wildly different needs and moods. The result can be hurt feelings and distance between family members.

Working parents often come home filled with stress and problems from the workplace. They’re in a “fix-it” mentality and they’re looking for some time to unwind before facing the brunt of their families.

Your kids, however, don’t care much about your work stress. They want a father who notices them and who’s excited to see them. Every little thing you do is noticed by your children—your facial expression, the way you hang up your coat, and the way you greet them. The question underlying all of this is, “Will daddy be here for me tonight?”

As a former athlete, I remember the preparation before competing that would put me in the right

“state” to play at the highest level.

We would visualize the game unfolding before us and spend some quiet time increasing our ability to relax and stay focused. When the game began, we were ready to play, largely because we had tuned into our bodies and created that readiness.

What kind of preparation do most of us put into our parenting role when we come home from work at night? Do we ready ourselves for being fully present to our kids and our spouse? Are we enthusiastic when we see them or are we consumed by our own issues?

Here are five ideas for readying yourself for your family when you come home at night:

1. Develop a ritual

It might be reading a prepared paragraph that you've written about being ready or having a moment of silence to help you go from work mode to home mode. Find something that reminds you of the daily discipline necessary to be your best when you come home to your family.

2. Find out what your family needs from you

It's hard to know how to make things work when you come home if you don't know what people need from you. If you don't know, ask them! The chances are good that they'll want to share their day with you. While things will vary, it helps to have a sense of how much each person needs from you after you walk in the door.

3. Let your family know what you need

If you need to have some time for yourself, let

your family know what you need so they don't feel left out. After your done taking your time, give them the welcome they deserve.

4. Use the ride home as a way to unwind

Using the ride home to prepare for life at home allows you a defined amount of time to shift from work mode to home mode. Use some deep breathing--with each breathe you become more relaxed and more focused on the needs at home.

5. Remember how easily we can shift away from the drama of work

It's easy to become overwhelmed by the emotions and thoughts that are produced from our jobs. The truth is that we can shift our thoughts and feelings away from work quite readily if we practice it. Work can be overwhelming, our reactions to it don't have to be. You bring home a message every night—"what's truly important in my life?" Your kids will get this message loud and clear.

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