

# How To Survive Working Different Shifts



Do you and your spouse work different shifts? If so, you're probably dealing with crazy scheduling problems all the time. Parenting expert and author Doreen Nagle says first it's best if you can relax a little about your situation and realize you're not the only parent trying to make this work. She says that with a bit of organization, planning and compassion, you can work it out, too.

## **Here are her recommendations:**

Get a big calendar and prioritize. That means you have to look at each day, each week, and make a schedule—then put it where everyone can see it. First take care of what absolutely has to be taken care of, then see how much time you have left and evaluate how you could best use it, says Nagle. Consult with your spouse so you can decide who's going to do what. If you're having trouble prioritizing, Nagle says you should ask yourself “What would be the consequences if you let go of the priorities for now.”

Use technology to stay connected. Nagle says to consider sending messages via e-mail, instant messaging and voice mail. She also says sending photos to each other's cell phones can keep parents engaged with what's going on with the kids and at home.

Leave messages of love, too. Don't just focus on what needs to be done. Use your messaging to let others know how you feel about them. Ask how their day has gone, let them know you care about what's going on in their lives even if you aren't around all the time. This is not just for the kids. Send messages to your spouse as well.

Shoot for overlap. Can you manage one meal a day together, even if it's brief? For example, Nagle says, if one spouse arrives home early in the morning, and the other has to leave shortly thereafter, sitting down for a breakfast as a family can keep everyone connected despite widely disparate work schedule.

Schedule time together as a couple. Nagle says you should try to have “couple time” at least once a month. Even if you can't swing a “date,” she recommends you take a walk or sit in the yard together and talk.

Keep in mind that you probably won't have to live like this forever. Reminding yourself that “this too shall pass” can help you get through the hard times.