



Finding a balance this fall

How to get back into the groove this September without going into overdrive

By Samantha Wu

September: It's the official end of summer and the beginning of projects, homework and for many moms, the challenge of getting kids to class and after-school activities, on time. For moms and kids alike, September spells hectic. But there are ways to carry the sense of summer tranquility well into the fall the new beginnings that come with it.

Lisa Martin, a coach for women in the workplace and author of *Briefcase Moms: 10 Proven Practices to Balance Working Mothers' Lives*, says that many people see September as the start of a new year. She says the best way to deal with the September rush is to plan ahead. Her advice is to begin to start thinking about plans and goals for the fall in August, when the summer is winding down but September is still a few weeks off. What needs to be accomplished or what new commitments will there be? Getting a head start on the planning will get you into the mindset of a regular routine. And that will lead to a much less hurried September.

Still, moments of calm seem rare when the September rush begins. Martin's best advice? Before you start wishing for more hours in the day, take the time to breathe.

"When you first wake in the morning, instead of rolling out of bed and jumping into your day, just lie there," says Martin. "Just breathe and think of your day ahead."

Taking a meditative moment before the start of your day and then periodically as your day progresses will help ease the stress. Think about the individual daily schedule for the kids, your spouse, and yourself, so you can start by planning ahead. Also, consider the kind of day you wish to have, be it calm and relaxing, productive or fun. Remind yourself of this when the stress starts to build to bring you back to that reflective state of mind you began with.

As is the case with most busy moms, daily To Do lists grow longer quickly. The key to reining in a list of errands is to avoid overbooking, overwhelming and over committing yourself.

"Attacking several tasks at once may get them done faster," says Martin. "Yet our focus can become so scattered that we experience nothing."

Rather than list all the things to do in one day, busy mothers should look at what needs to get done and what can wait.

"Ask yourself these three questions," says Martin. "What are my top priorities this fall? How can I slow down? What can I do to stay present?"

Martin says doing one thing at a time instead of constantly multitasking allows you to really enjoy what you're doing and focus on living in the moment, allowing you to make the transition from summer to fall, easier for all.

Turning this fall into a stress-free transition from summer is simple if you take time to keep your mind at ease.

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