



The OSUAP Connection

Issue #69

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who is new to
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Please forward this
Newsletter to them!*

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OSUAP Goals

- ◆ Encourage professional development
- ◆ Develop leadership skills
- ◆ Network with peers

Special Notes:

Happy August!



Don't miss an opportunity to join the
[OSU Leadership Center](#) for free
online with [Coffee and Conversation](#)!

September 10 For more
information, or to register [click here](#).

September 20 For more
information, or to register [click here](#).



Tips For Going Back to the Office After Spending Months Home With Your Kids *by Shannon Day*

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and it was announced that both school and work-related life would be moving to the homefront, parents across the U.S. did a collective jaw drop. Some parents had to juggle their work and family life with everyone at home while others ended up losing their jobs or putting their employment on hold indefinitely.

After spending a year (or more) working from home with their kids around, many parents are preparing for a return to in-person work. This means not only having to wear real pants for the first time in a while, but it also marks the beginning of a transition from the familiar home routine back into the "real world."

Some individuals became parents for the first time during the pandemic. Going through a pregnancy and having a baby during COVID is a unique experience, one that comes with heightened anxieties or even a greater sense of isolation. However, you are not alone. There are many groups and resources for parents who have similar experiences.

How You Might Be Feeling

Heading back to in-person work is bound to be emotionally complex. "Many parents are going to feel a wide array of emotions—joy for the quiet work

environment, overwhelmed with the transition, grief about the time away from home—and many of those feelings will co-exist," says Kelly Bos, MSW, RSW, [Talk Therapy Pod](#) co-host, social worker, and psychotherapist.

Bos explains how conflicting some of these emotions can be. For example, parents could feel elated about having some time to themselves, but at the same time, fearful about being less available to their kids. They could feel a sense of excitement to see work colleagues in person while simultaneously mourning the loss of the lunchtime chats with their kids.

Karla Brennen, a mother of three, said that she and her kids were working and doing their homeschool work from makeshift office spaces in the kitchen, living room, and bedrooms. Brennen was making lunches, hosting Zoom calls, and managing interruptions, all of which extended her workday. "Working from home wasn't less work, it was more," she says.

No matter how they are feeling, Bos reminds parents to be good to themselves: "It's also important to acknowledge our feelings without judgment and be mindful that this will be a time of adapting but that eventually, life will go back to feeling more routine."

(Continued on page 3)



Seven ways to help children and teens cope with stress *by Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk*

Going back to school can be a stressful time for children and teenagers. Ohio State's chief wellness officer has advice for how to help young people manage big feelings that sometimes develop into anxiety and depression.

Seven strategies

Rehearse situations

Practice school situations in ways that make them less stressful. Visit areas your child might be worried about, such as the cafeteria and playground, and identify "safe" places. You can role-play stressful situations at home with your child ("Let's act it out. You be you, and I'll be a girl eating lunch. Try to sit by me.") or rehearse routines so that they feel natural.

Take baby steps

Rather than avoiding activities and things that spur fears, it's best to approach them. Don't try to shield your child from every perceived danger. Instead, help them approach fears by exposing your child to them slowly.

Educate your team

Brief your child's teachers, caregivers and friends' parents about your child's depression or anxiety. Knowing what they might encounter will help them understand and not misinterpret your child's behavior. One parent created a one-page handout called "Social Anxiety" for her son's teachers, principal and camp counselors, who appreciated the tips.

Get moving

Findings from studies have shown that keeping your child or teen engaged in regular physical activity can help alleviate stress, anxiety and depression.

Read a story

Young children appreciate stories about someone else going through a similar situation that shows them what to do. You can make one up and let your child draw the illustrations, or visit your library for books like *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes.

Enlist friends

Children can provide great emotional support for each other. If your child has been separated from school friends during the summer, try to get together with one or two of them before school starts to rebuild friendships.

Empower choice

Unfortunately, right at the time when they most need help, depressed or anxious children may act out, refuse to participate, have emotional outbursts or act irritable, and that can lead to problems at school. Don't talk about the behavior in terms of "bad" behavior—this will only make them feel worse. Instead, ask the child how he felt during the behavior, and how he feels about it now. Then, help him decide what he would like to do next time. Above all, don't take it personally: Your child's behavior is not his or your fault. Patience and talking with your child or teen about



how they feel are the best gifts that you can give a depressed or anxious child.

Signs of anxiety in children and teens

1. Irritability and restlessness, especially in younger children
2. Behavior regression (going back to a time when the child felt more comfortable) or aggression
3. Difficulty sleeping
4. Difficulty staying focused
5. Stomach aches, especially in school-age children
6. Headaches, especially in teenagers
7. Nail-biting or finger tapping
8. Not wanting to go to school

Signs of depression in children and teens

1. Irritability, especially in younger children
2. Restlessness, especially in younger children
3. Acting out
4. Anger, especially in teenagers
5. Difficulty sleeping, either too little or too much
6. Sadness
7. Lack of interest in usual activities
8. Complaints of stomach aches and headaches (these are common)
9. Anxiety and depression often go hand in hand

Help is available

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is the gold standard evidence-based treatment for both depression and anxiety, but many parents do not know to ask for a counselor who specifically delivers CBT. In CBT, children and teens are taught that how they think directly affects how they feel and how they behave. With this type of therapy, children and teens learn to turn negative thoughts into positive ones to cope and feel better. Medication is usually reserved for more severe symptoms of depression and anxiety or if CBT is not having positive effects.

Talk to your healthcare provider about evaluating your child if you are concerned that your child may be suffering from anxiety or depression. For more information about [cognitive behavioral therapy](#), see my column about it in the Winter 2017 edition of *Ohio State Alumni Magazine*. Additionally, the National Institute of Mental Health has great resources for parents regarding [child depression and anxiety](#).

Article originally appeared in [OSU's Alumni Magazine](#).



Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk is vice president for health promotion, university chief wellness officer, dean and Helene Fuld Health Trust Professor of Evidence-based Practice in the College of Nursing, professor of pediatrics and psychiatry in the College of Medicine and executive director of the Helene Fuld Health Trust National Institute for Evidence-based Practice in Nursing and Healthcare.

(TIPS FOR GOING BACK TO THE OFFICE Continued from page 1)

Despite the juggle and occasional worry about the boys, Brennen is grateful to be working in person again. "I really never realized how much I loved being with people. Getting up and going to work, although hectic, really motivates me," she says.

Preparing Yourself Mentally

It is important to keep your expectations in check—remember, this transition might be bumpy! Lisa Howe, MSW, is a parenting coach and the owner of [Becoming Peaceful](#), an online resource and coaching service for parents.

Howe has been reminding her clients to be mindful of their expectations as they head into this new post-pandemic normal, noting they may require more flexibility, compassion, and patience than they might expect.

Now that Brennen and her husband are back to work in person, she—like many parents—leaves the house each morning with a million questions running through her mind: *Did the dog get fed? Are the boys spending too much time on their screens?*

The transition won't just be a challenge for the parents, either. Your kids might not remember what it was like before you were home all of the time. They may have difficulties coming to terms with what it looks like when that isn't the case.

"None of us have ever re-entered life after a pandemic before, whether you are 4 or 40," Howe says. "Expect it to feel uncomfortable and weird. Expect tears and meltdowns. Expect separation anxiety. If we expect our children to react as they did before when we went to work, we are setting everyone up to struggle."

Bos suggests talking about upcoming changes, including potential challenges and upsides, with the kids. Getting them involved in the process by asking them for their ideas on how to make the transition easier is also helpful.

Practical Organization Tips

Heading back to in-person work may present obstacles that used to be second nature, but now feel foreign, such as scheduling a carpool for your kids or packing your work bag the night before.

Choosing a few areas to organize ahead of time can help make the transition back to the outside world feel more doable. One area that benefits from some forethought is meal planning.

Some parents find creating a meal plan for the week helps to simplify things. "By meal planning, we know what we are eating every day which saves time, stress, and money," Brennen says.

Buying pre-cut vegetables or canned sauces, meal-prepping on Sundays, and stocking up the freezer can all be time-saving moves. There are some great meal planning apps out there you can try, as well.

Getting back into the swing of the morning routine may also take some effort. If you're feeling up to it, you could try a few practice runs to get you and your kids accustomed to the new routines. This could include getting up and dressed, having breakfast, and doing a pretend school or daycare drop-off.

Staying Connected to the Kids

After months of round-the-clock time with your kids, you might be wondering how to maintain your connection to them when you're not with them. Howe suggests adding little notes to their lunch boxes or spending a few minutes together before the day begins.

If your children are staying home with a caregiver, Howe suggests engaging in some one-on-one play-time or snuggles before you leave. These few moments could be a nice way to connect, putting you, as well as them, at ease.

If you're en route doing the morning drop-off circuit, some car-singing might be a nice way to unite. Try giving the kids a big, grounding hug or some kind words of encouragement. A quick "I love you" before you go your separate ways for the day is always reassuring.

Brennen says she and her sons stay in touch throughout her workday using messenger and Facetime. "Sometimes they reach out to get permission to do some gaming and other times it's to tattle on each other or to send a cute photo of the cat," she says.

No matter what this transition brings, the whole family will eventually settle into a new rhythm. Before you know it, the new normal will just be normal.

Tips for Staying Connected

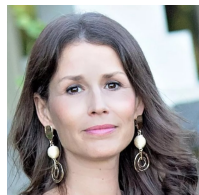
- Ask them for ideas on how to make changes easier
- Encourage regular check-ins throughout the day
- Schedule quality family time together
- Offer a safe space to chat
- Honor their experiences (by listening and validating)

A Word from [Verywell](#)

There are many ups and downs that come with parenthood. Because of COVID-19, parents have more balls to juggle than ever before. But, you don't have to catch them all.

Instead of expecting life to be exactly like it was pre-pandemic, prepare yourself for the potential challenges. Stay in communication with the kids and remember that there will be bumps along the way.

Take your time and go easy on yourself as you head back to in-person work-life. Reach out to other parents who are going back to the office, too. And remember that even though you may feel overwhelmed or stressed sometimes, you are not alone.



[Shannon Day](#)

Freelance Writer, Teacher, Author

Expertise

Parenting, Lifestyle, Women's Health

Education

University of Ottawa, D'Youville College, Yorkville University

Highlights

- Co-author of [Martinis & Motherhood: Tales of Wonder, Woe & WTF?!](#)
- Freelance writer specializing in parenting, lifestyle, and women's humor
- Published in several online parenting and lifestyle sites as well as in print

"Do you ever feel like you're hanging on the edge of parenthood's cliff with nothing but a partnerless sock to cling to? Well, you are not alone. We are all in this together—each one of us a work in progress."

— SHANNON DAY

Experience

Shannon Day is co-author of [Martinis & Motherhood: Tales of Wonder, Woe & WTF?!](#)

This mom of three is surviving and (dare she say, without jinxing herself) ever-so-occasionally thriving. Her secret to this loosely defined version of parenting success? Laughter. Lots of laughs. But most importantly, breaks. This includes literal breaks that involve a couch and a freshly re-warmed coffee from the microwave along with emotional breaks, like the ones you give yourself when the parenting-ball gets dropped.

Education

Shannon has a BA in Communications/English from the University of Ottawa, a Secondary Teaching Certification from D'Youville College in Buffalo, New York, and a CELTA certificate from MC Academy in Manchester, UK.

She is presently working toward a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology from Yorkville University in Canada.

Link to original post on [Verywell Family](#). Reprinted with permission from the Author.

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Email: [Michelle Pennington](mailto:Michelle.Pennington@osu.edu)

Chair, Communications Work Group

Please be sure to submit suggestions by the 20th of each month to be included in the Newsletter!

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"What you do today can improve all your tomorrows."

- Ralph Marston

Upcoming Important Dates

9/6	Labor Day — Offices Closed
9/16-11/5	Buckeyes for Charity buckeyesforcharity.osu.edu
10/15	Covid-19 Vaccination Deadline
12/31	Buckeye Box Officially Retires (Learn More)

Calling It a Day: Five Ways to Leave Work on Time and Still Be Productive by Laura Stack



"We need to do a better job of putting ourselves higher on our own 'to do' lists." —Michelle Obama, former First Lady of the United States.

Part of crafting a work/life balance that you can maintain indefinitely is knowing when it's time to pack it in for the day. You may not have the option of leaving at 5 PM, but then, who does these days? Still, setting a reasonable time to leave work will keep you sane — and profitable. If you regularly read my blog, you probably know that after about 50 hours a week, the typical worker stops being productive due to both mental and physical fatigue. Those who work 80 hours a week rarely get more done than those who work 40-50 hours a week, according to studies, and too many hours endanger your health, too. There were good reasons why labor and management compromised on the 40-hour work-week a century or so ago. They clearly knew something many of us have forgotten. Rather than let your inner workaholic take over, try these ways of ensuring you leave on time every day.

1. **Plan your "exit strategy" in advance.** In addition to creating a to-do list, visualize when you want to leave for the day, and why. The "why" is important; don't just think, "I get to leave" when it's time to go; think, "That's when I get to go home to my family and friends," or "That's when I get to go to the gym," or whatever works for you. Set an alarm for your exit time, and structure your day in a way that lets you finish up by then. It can help if you ensure you have a social event to attend, like a club meeting or dinner with your S.O.
2. **Make it clear to your co-workers that you're leaving at a specific time.** That target may not always prove as firm as you like, but it's something to shoot for. For one thing, it'll make sure you budget your time properly so you're consistently making progress. For another, your co-workers will most likely come to you with any issues earlier in the day — and you can leave most meetings, as necessary, without feeling guilty, whether they're officially over or not.
3. **Stick to your priorities.** It may make you feel good to strike a low-priority item off your list, and depending upon your mood or when your energy peak strikes, that may be best.

However, you're better served by chipping away at the big projects instead, especially during said energy peaks. You can handle less-important tasks during energy lulls or between larger tasks, let them roll over to the next day, or just let them fall off your list.

4. **Don't waste time.** Kick procrastination and perfectionism to the curb, rein in all the personal distractions you can, and always have something to do next. The latter ensures you don't have to waste time deciding what to work on. Plan your day realistically; don't jam it too full, defeating the purpose. Leave a little "wiggle room" just in case some new high-priority item pops up. If it doesn't, take something off a standby list to work on until it's time to head home. And use little time-saving tricks when you can: for example, call instead of email when possible.
5. **Start preparing to leave 15-20 minutes before quitting time.** Establish an end-of-the-day routine, where you tidy up your work materials and workspace, file everything where it goes, get any last-minute information from co-workers, save your files, shut down your browser, clean up your desktops (virtual and physical), etc. Build and check your to-do list for the next work-day, focusing on high-priority and pending items (often pretty much the same). I also recommend you review the day, focusing on what went wrong so you can fix it in the future, and what went right so you can emulate it.

Quittin' Time

Your daily quitting time shouldn't be a big deal — just part of a productive day. If you find yourself often pushing past a reasonable quitting time and working until seven or eight at night, then something's wrong. Some would say you're incompetent because you can't properly manage your time, and they're not necessarily wrong. Part of time management is ensuring you don't push yourself to work longer hours to catch up except in times of great need, which should be rare. **Most people won't even notice if you work 70-hour weeks; so, put a significant portion of your time into the life part of the work/life equation.** Otherwise, what the heck are you working for besides money?



Laura Stack, MBA, CSP, CPAE is an award-winning keynote speaker, bestselling author, and noted authority on productivity and performance.

Laura blogs at [The Productivity Pro](#), [the Huffington Post](#), [the Business Journal](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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