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## 6 EASY STEPS TO SEPARATING YOUR PERSONAL LIFE FROM YOUR BUSINESS

If you work from home, chances are you already know that you're really pulling "double duty". You probably work on your business while doing the laundry, corralling the kids, or fixing dinner... and let's not forget all the phone calls from family and friends expecting you to run errands or just "go out" for an afternoon of fun.

One of the hardest parts of running a home business is separating your work from your family and social life. Here are six proven ways to keep your home life running smoothly while keeping your business on track.

1. First, create a work schedule and stick with it. It may be tempting to answer personal calls during the day or take business calls after-hours, but doing this actually shows that you're expendable – not dependable – and people will take for granted that you'll "always be there" for any little things that come up. Even though family comes first, stay true to your business hours and resist the urge to chat with friends or pick up groceries during working hours.
2. Your friends may consider "working from home" an invitation to chat during the day or just go out for coffee or shopping for an afternoon. Make it clear that your business hours are just that – for business. Leave personal calls for after-hours, and you'll find that your friends will gradually accept your schedule without feeling slighted.
3. Just because you have to set up a work schedule, doesn't mean that you have to keep the same hours as everyone else. One of the benefits of working for yourself is setting your own hours to fit your most productive times. Whether you're an early bird or a night owl, you'll find that you'll get much more done when you're attuned to your body's own natural rhythms. Some people work in the morning, take a break in the afternoon when the kids are home from school, and work again in the evening. Schedule your work time when you feel the most productive and you'll find that things get done easier, faster and better than when you were dragging along during those same rigid work hours that everyone else has.
4. If getting after-hours business calls or work day personal calls is a problem, it helps to have a separate business phone line, or at least an answering machine or voice mail, to take the incoming calls. This also gives your business a more professional appearance to clients than if you and your family make and receive calls from the same phone line.
5. If at all possible, try to separate your "home office" from the rest of your home. If you don't have the luxury of a separate room, a room partition or screen can be just as helpful. This also serves as a visual cue to family that you're working and shouldn't be bothered.
6. Dress and act professionally while working. Some people find it helpful to dress in casual business attire during their working hours. This reinforces that just because you're working from home doesn't make you any less of a professional. Answer the phone with your name, or business name, and keep your children off the phone during business hours. Also, spend money investing in the tools you need to do your job right. A cell phone, fax machine or even a budget computer can help turn your home office into a true workspace.

If you follow all of these tips and stick with them, chances are you'll find a routine that not only makes you feel productive and active in your business, but also projects the message that you mean business – literally!

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