

# Keeping it Together:

## 7 Tips for Busy Moms

By Chela Wallace

As the mom to three sons (a ten-year-old and four-year-old twins), finding time for everything and everyone (including myself) is a daily challenge. Out of necessity, I've developed strategies for making it all work. Try these out, come up with your own, mix and match for a combo that works for you. Be realistic and tell the perfectionist in your head to take a hike. I guarantee, you'll keep your sanity (most of the time). If you later choose to re-enter the workforce, don't forget to add "Time Management Guru" to your resume!

### 1. Take care of yourself before the kids get up.

Every morning, make the day your own by taking 10 minutes to do something just for yourself. Don't like exercising first thing? Try meditating or gentle stretching with deep breathing (this feels especially good after a warm shower). How about some writing? Don't shoot for the great American novel: today's To-Do list, journaling, or a birthday card to an old friend is enough.

### 2. Think about the next day's activities and prep the night before.

Laying out clothes, packing backpacks and making lunches the night before is always a good idea, but don't forget about after-school activities. A couple years ago my oldest sang in a choir on Tuesdays after school. On Monday night, I got his rehearsal music together, stocked the twins' diaper bag – and put them in the car. When the time came to leave, all I had to remember was the kids – and the mad rush out the door wasn't quite so stressful.

### 3. Make that list!

And then update it as you go. Nothing is more satisfying than crossing stuff off. Moms have to keep track of a lot of things, including constantly monitoring

where the kids are. (Hey, if we couldn't do this, the saber tooth tiger would have gobbled up the little tykes while we cooked the mastodon stew!) Give yourself only one thing to remember: look at the list.

### 4. Keep two calendars – one on the wall, one on your computer.

I'm not suggesting this because I have twins and think of everything in twos – I swear! We have a family calendar in the kitchen, the one room where we all congregate. I put recurring events on it (like my oldest son's Taekwondo schedule) where everyone can see. I use my email program's calendar for time-sensitive special events, such as dental appointments, library book due dates or calling my OB to set up my annual appointment (oh, joy!). I'm on the computer often enough that the popup reminder works perfectly.

### 5. When the kids nap, it's power naptime for you!

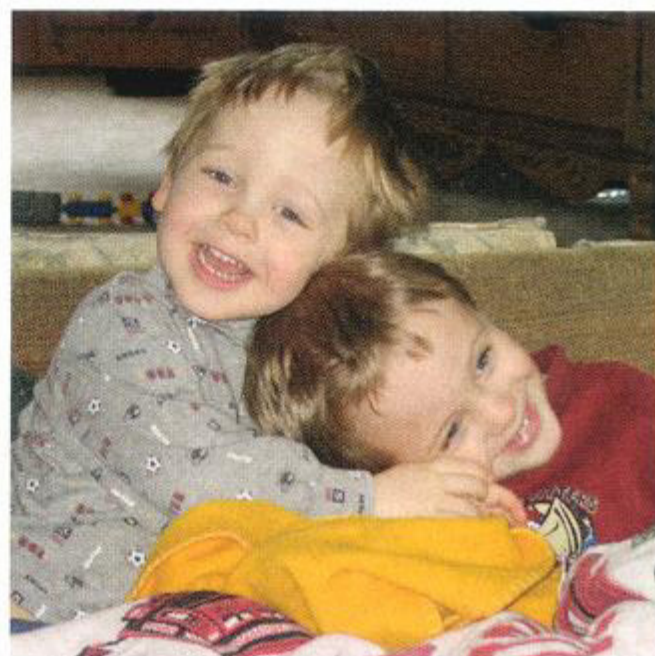
Find a favorite spot and lie down for a quick refresher. I stretch out like a cat on the cushy living room carpet in a little bit of sunshine and just let my mind go. I set the oven timer for 20 minutes to get in some good "zoning" without the worry of over-sleeping. When the timer goes off, the "beep-beep-beep" is a gentle way to re-enter the world.

### 6. Buy a headset for your portable phone.

Plug it in and clip your phone to your waistband or pop it in the pocket of your sweats. (You are wearing sweats at home, right?) Everyone I call has gotten used to hearing the sound of dish washing in the background. I never read or write while on the phone, but I've become expert at switching laundry, prepping meals, making beds, etc., while talking.

### 7. Save the brain-dead stuff for when you're, well, brain-dead.

Nothing hits the spot after a long day like a good crime drama re-run. That's when I fold all my laundry. I don't put it away until the morning; instead, I create "Laundry-Henge" on the floor in front of me: A semi-circle of folded clothes, stacked and organized. I also use this time to sort through paperwork from the kitchen counter, recycling the junk and lightly organizing the rest of the stuff into Priority Piles: Urgent, Later and Maybe I'll Get to It One Day. ♡



Chela Wallace's twin sons, Lars and Derik

Chela Wallace is a freelance writer who lives and works in the Portland, Oregon area. She is a mother of three including a set of twins. She recently wrote about her twin sons' preschool and was recently published in the business section of the Beaverton Valley Times. She has two children's books out making the rounds to publishers.

In addition to her creative writing, she has been a technical writer/copyeditor for over 12 years.

