

Implementing Habit 3 By Putting Family First

Habit 3: Put First Things First is about life management – your purpose, values, roles, and priorities. But what are your “first things”? Many would say their first priority is their family, but struggle to actually put them above everything else, especially work. It’s easy to make the case that work simply HAS to come first, as work is what allows you to provide for your family. However, putting family first can actually help you accomplish more at work. When you prioritize the family stuff you want to do, you are forced to eliminate anything unnecessary to make it happen. There’s also no more guilt about what you’re missing at home which allows you to enjoy and focus more on your work. These things will ultimately lead to more focused, efficient, and effective work hours. Here are a few simple ways you can practice putting your family first.

Leave work at the same time every day. Whether it's four, five, or six pm, try to stick to a particular time. Treat it as if you're going to an important meeting and make it a priority to leave the office on time. If you're ever running late, call ahead and let your family know. This will help your spouse and children feel like they can count on you, and they'll be able to look forward to your coming home.

Plan specific actions and activities. Planning is the best way to make and keep commitments to our families. Your planner's best attribute is the ability to help you achieve what matters most. Every weekly and daily planning session should include your most important people – with a scheduled phone call, outing, chat, or activity. Truly put first, first – by keeping them foremost in your thoughts and plans.

Practice transitioning. You can take a deep breath before you enter the house, reminding yourself that you are no longer at work. You can also use the time in which you change your clothes to refocus on the second part of your day. Very productive people know that a short amount of time is needed in order to shift from work to home mode. Without the transition, you may end up being short with your spouse if you're still in work mode.

Leave work at work. When you're home, don't check email, texts, or take work calls. This is very difficult, but nothing says “you're not important” more than checking notifications when you should be helping your kids with homework or during a conversation with your spouse. Instead, give your family your full attention when you're with them and show them they are your top priority.

There are many different good and worthwhile things that we tell ourselves we do to benefit our families. We focus on health and fitness so we can be present and long-term in their lives, we work to make the world and our communities a better place for them to enjoy, and we spend time at work to provide for their needs and wants. All of this and more is true. However, we also shouldn't forget to spend time with them now. Later is a poor substitute, and usually turns out to be elusive. If we achieve our goals in every area but don't deeply connect with our children and spouse, then at the end we will likely not count our life a success. Instead, put your family first and watch everything else fall into place.