

News For SWIM PARENTS

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Kids and Two-Career Parents

The prototypical swimming mother, renowned for devoting herself wholly to her children's swimming careers is nearly an extinct species. With both parents working in 70% of households, the old swimming mom is now a career mom, with all the stresses and complications that brings. And that means everybody in the world of age group swimming must adjust - from coaches who will have to be more reasonable in enforcing rules on practice attendance and punctuality...to parents who must plan more thoroughly to arrange kids transportation from school or home to an afternoon practice session...to the demands the sport makes on families who must give up now-precious weekends to attend meets.

Making time for kids, jobs, and the personal needs of every family member is the greatest challenge in the two-career family. A child who feels neglected by busy parents will feel resentful. Here are some hints adapted from PARENTS magazine on how to prevent kids from feeling neglected.

It's important for kids to feel they're not competing for attention with their parents' careers. Dr. James Comer, professor of child psychology at Yale University suggests putting your child's practices, competitions, and special events on your work calendar and trying to plan work requirements around them. If one parent has a more flexible schedule than the other at particular times, that parent would take on greater

responsibility for involvement in swimming activities. Whenever schedules permit, both parents should attend the kids' activities. When neither parent is available, make arrangements for the children to call on neighbors or nearby relatives.

Dr. Comer also suggests parents should be willing to receive a call at work from their children at any time. If an ethos of cooperation and teamwork evolves through honest and open communication of the reasons for both parents working, children will be unlikely to abuse the privilege. This can also be an opportunity to give children added responsibilities and a meaningful role to play in achieving family goals. Parents who actively plan for and show a clear interest in their children's activities will find that the kids, in return, respect the needs of their parents.

Above all, Dr. Comer stresses the importance of listening to the children's concerns and being willing to acknowledge the shortcomings of the situation to address the kinds of plans and cooperation needed for all family members to have their needs met.