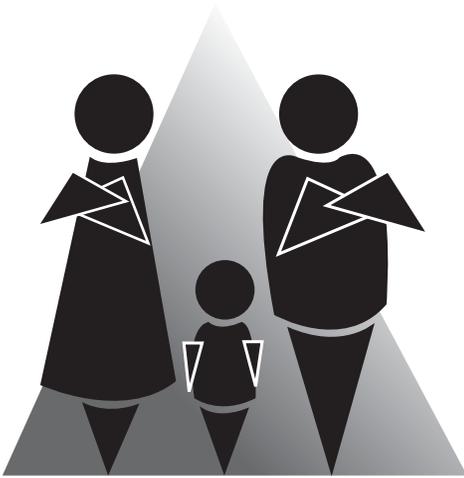


**EXTENSION PROGRAMS**

Agriculture and Forestry  
 Community Leadership  
 Economic Development  
 Environmental Sciences  
 Family and Consumer Sciences  
 4-H Youth Development  
 Natural Resources



Are Your Children in the  
**MIDDLE**  
 of Your Conflict or Divorce?

**Not Enough Hours in the Day?**

“**T**here are many things I want to do. I want to finish my education, find a different job and volunteer in my child’s school. Yet, time just disappears and I don’t get these things done. There are so many things to do each day. I never have time to plan. I feel lucky if I get through the day in one piece!”

Single parent families have hectic lives. Most single parents feel they have too little time and too much to do. The first step to making the most of your time, however, is thinking about your goals. What is important to you?

**Why Have Goals?**

Having goals helps define what is important to you. Goals help you decide how to spend your time. Goals are something meaningful a person works to achieve. Goals usually answer the question: Who wants what and when?

You may have **personal goals** such as losing weight, staying in touch with friends or finding a job.

Also, you may have **family goals** such as making time to have fun with your family, working together to save money for a family vacation or volunteering together.

**Determine Your Goals**

All families have a set of values or beliefs that are important. Thinking about your values helps to develop your goals. One family may value family time. Perhaps the goal of the family is to eat together. Another family may value cooperation. Family members find ways to help each other.

Having goals gives you something to work toward. Think about these questions, and then list one or two goals for each.

- ▶ **What do I want for myself?**
- ▶ **What do I want for my children?**
- ▶ **What do I want from my children?**
- ▶ **What do we want as a family?**

Include the entire family when deciding the family’s major goals. Goals may be short range (eat dinner together twice this week), intermediate (in three months, I will be in better physical health) or long-term (in a year, we will go on a family vacation).

**Set Priorities Among Your Goals**

It’s easier to reach your goals if you focus only on one or two at a time. Working toward too many goals at the same time makes it hard to reach any of them.

Ask yourself the following questions. **Write down** your responses to help you think about which of the goals you listed above are important and why.

- ▶ How many of your goals are material goods or things that can be purchased?
- ▶ Why are these goals important to **you**, to **you and your children**, or to **your children**?
- ▶ Are these realistic goals?
- ▶ How do the goals affect your behavior?
- ▶ How do these goals affect other people in your family? How much time do you spend now working toward each of your goals?

Look at your list of goals, and think about these questions. Assign a letter to each goal to show how important that goal is to you. Assign an A if it is very important, B if it is somewhat important and C if it is less important.





# Are Your Children in the MIDDLE of your Conflict or Divorce?

## Not Enough Hours in the Day?

### Reaching Your Goals

You may now have many goals in mind, but how can you reach them? These steps should help you reach your goals. Try these steps with one of your goals.

1. Define the goal.
2. List all the possible ways to reach the goal.
3. Develop a plan to reach the goal.
4. Carry out and evaluate the plan. Ask yourself and your family how the plan is working. Be flexible. Make changes to your plan if needed.
5. Review the goal. Did the plan work well?

Here's an example of how to reach a goal using these steps.

1. **Define goal:** To have time to exercise three times a week.
2. **Possible ways to reach goal:** Get up early, take a long lunch or make time right before dinner.
3. **Plan:** Get up one hour early on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
4. **Evaluate:** Am I too tired to get up early? Do I need to make time during the day? Do I feel more physically fit? Fridays are too busy in the morning, so I will make time to walk with my two children on Saturdays.
5. **Review:** The plan worked because I could change it and still meet my goal to exercise.

### Make the Most of Your Time

Reaching goals is learning how to make the most of your time. The good news is there are things to do to save time. Check three ideas from the following list that you will try.

- ▶ Plan daily "To Do" lists. Don't forget to include day-to-day activities. Post the list in the kitchen or someplace where you will see it.
- ▶ Allow small blocks of time to work toward goals and planning.
- ▶ Set priorities among goals using the "A-B-C" system described above. Remember not to fill your time with "C" activities that are not as important.
- ▶ Get up early one or two days a week. Use the time to think and plan.
- ▶ Plan ahead for meals. Make extra meals on weekends, and freeze them for the week ahead.
- ▶ Write down a list of main dishes for the week as a reminder.
- ▶ Schedule appointments together. For example, try to get back-to-back dentist appointments for a few family members.
- ▶ Have a special place to post reminders and special notes.

- ▶ Schedule time to relax.
- ▶ Use your waiting time. Don't worry about what you could be doing. Instead relax, read or plan.
- ▶ Plan time for family meetings to discuss goals, family decisions and activities to do together.

### Barriers and Ways to Change

It is easy reading about what to do. Yet, actually making the most of your time is another story! Knowing some of the barriers to making the most of your time should help you develop useful ways to maximize your time.

**Barrier:** Putting off until later what needs to be done now.

**Way to Change:** Divide a project into small deadlines; reward yourself for meeting each deadline. For example, if you feel overwhelmed by the cleaning, laundry and cooking, work on developing a schedule. On Mondays, clean the bathrooms; on Tuesdays, do the laundry, etc. Don't forget to involve the whole family.

**Barrier:** Expecting perfection.

**Way to Change:** Work toward doing your best rather than perfection.

**Barrier:** Fear of saying no.

**Way to Change:** Practice different ways of saying no. If you commit to doing too many things, there will never be enough time to finish everything. Before you start, think about how long it takes to do something.

**Barrier:** Clutter.

**Way to Change:** Organize. Have a folder for receipts, school forms, for emergencies, etc.

**Barrier:** Thinking about the past.

**Way to Change:** Focus on things you can change and work toward the future. Make the time to think about your dreams and what you want to accomplish.



# Are Your Children in the MIDDLE of your Conflict or Divorce?

## Not Enough Hours in the Day?

If you are interested in more information on this and other related topics, please call your local LSU AgCenter parish office. Below is the list of topics in the "Are Your Children in the Middle of Your Conflict or Divorce?" series.

A Child's View of Divorce  
The Business of Co-parenting  
Coping with Stress and Change  
Costs of Raising Children  
Custody Issues Today  
Dating Issues  
Disciplining Children  
Friendship and Support  
Help! I Feel Overwhelmed  
Loss of a Relationship  
Managing Income and Expenses  
Not Enough Hours in the Day  
Separating Your Finances  
Sharing Parenting  
Talking with Your Children  
Talking with Your Children About Money  
Talking with Your Children -- Communicating  
Within Your Family: Active Listening  
Visitation Do's and Don'ts

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