

# 5 Tips to Make Your Commute Work for Your Family

By Jennifer Matlack - April 2, 2014



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The time it takes you to leave the office and rejoin your family offers a valuable opportunity to decompress and transition from career woman to nurturing mom. And making that shift is essential.

"It can help you stop your mind from pondering events from the workday and shake off stressors, which will make you more available for whatever your children require during those critical hours between dinner and bedtime," says Julia Samton, M.D., a neuropsychiatrist in New York City. You'll also be

able to more fully enjoy loving moments like bedtime snuggles and kisses, she says. Here are five ways to manage your commute so you arrive home ready to start your second shift with grace and ease.

### Come to a stop.

If you're driving, pull over to the side of the road. "Taking an extra five or 10 minutes isn't likely to be a big deal for your sitter or whomever may be with the kids, and it could be a game changer for the evening," says Ramani Durvasula, Ph.D., a psychologist in Los Angeles. Turn your attention to the silence in the car, your breath, or something in front of you such as tree leaves shimmying in the wind. "This will help you move into the present moment and away from thoughts that keep you mentally stuck at the office," says Durvasula.

### Divide your commute in half.

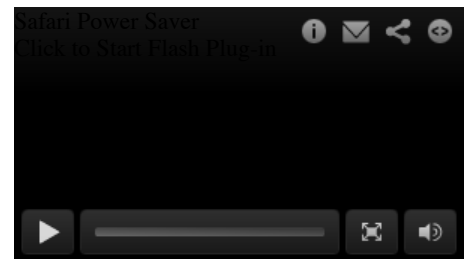
During the first portion, reflect on events that transpired at the office. Consider which goals were met, and those projects which are ongoing. Then visualize yourself actually shutting off your computer, turning off the light, and closing your office door behind you. "This action can provide a feeling of completion and help you leave work at work," says Dayna M. Kurtz, a licensed social worker and postpartum specialist in New York City. During the second

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portion of your commute, think about what you are most eager to do when you arrive home. For example, you might think about giving your child a big hug and asking what she made in art class that day, putting on your sweatpants and slippers, and watering your houseplants. Letting these scenarios fill your mind will make you ready to follow through with them—and enjoy them.

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Use your breathe to soothe.

Pay attention to any areas in your body where you're holding stress. Are you clutching the steering wheel tightly or clamping your jaw? Once you identify any tight spots, practice a sequence of deep, full-bellied breaths as you release those muscles. Research shows that the way you breathe can actually change how you feel. So if you breathe deeply and slowly, you'll end up feeling calm.

Clean up after yourself.

Before you get out of the car, collect any trash or toys that are on the car seats or floor. If you have a pack of wipes handy, dust the dashboard and clean up any spills around the cup holders. "Creating order in a space has a psychological effect of clearing your mind when it feels cluttered with thoughts," says Durvasula.



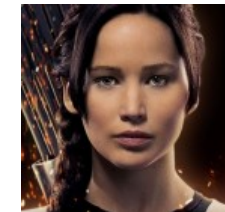
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