



ChildBuilders

Houston's Advocates for Mental Health in Children

Navigating Work and Family

By Joanne Go, ChildBuilders' Community Education Director

Dr. Ellen Galinsky, President of the Families and Work Institute, has written her sixteenth book, [Ask the Children: What America's Children Really Think About Working Parents](#). The 391 page book is full of research resulting from years of studies and many one-on-one interviews with moms, dads and children.

On a recent visit to Houston, Dr. Galinsky spoke on the subject of navigating work and family. She said, "Children should be heard in communities every day because they have important information that can shed new light on some of the debates our society has been having for many years." For example, when parents were asked what they thought their children would desire most, 56 percent guessed that their children would wish that their parents would spend more time at home. But, surprisingly, children said they wished that their parents were less tired and stressed!

The author found that children are very concerned about their parents stress level, and that some will even call their parents near the end of the workday just to gauge their mood so they will know what to expect when their parents return home. Dr. Galinsky says, "Children appreciate it when you tell them what's bothering you at work in an appropriate way." In other words, without giving them all the details, you may let them know that you have a big deadline coming up, or that someone new is sharing your workspace and you are making adjustments. These are things that your children can understand and it makes them feel free to share details of their lives with us, too.

One comment that children repeated often was, "I like it when my parents are there for me." A research team worked hard to define what exactly "there for me" means and came up with two important concepts.

1. Children want 'hang around time'. That blessed unrushed family time when you hang out at home and do stuff, when "we are going with the flow" and enjoying each others' company.
2. Children also value focused time. "Spending some mellow time together becomes the catalyst for focused time." Focused time is the time that we spend truly communicating and connecting. In her book, Ellen Galinsky writes that children reported they would put their hands on their parents' faces and tell them to "tune in, please". A parent described how her child would say, "Earth to Mom, Earth to Mom".

The author ended her presentation with some wishes of her own. She hopes that the societal debate will change from an either/or position on work vs. family and quality vs. quantity time. She believes we can have both healthy families and healthy work environments and both quality and quantity in our relationships with our children. She calls for society to value the important work of being a parent, and to support quality childcare because it supports parent care. Dr. Galinsky would also like to see parents become more intentional in their parenting. In other words, to have a plan, to know where they want to go, even though some mistakes will be made along the way.

For more information, please check out Dr. Galinsky's book and the following website www.familiesandwork.org.

**Do not expect to be perfect.
PARENTING IS A DIFFICULT JOB.**

ChildBuilders (formerly known as HAMIC), founded in 1974, is a non-profit organization that provides innovative programs to educate parents, children, teachers and the community about the emotional well-being of children and their families. www.childbuilders.org ChildBuilders Community Education.

For further information & referral
call your child's school counselor

DePelchin Children's Center	713-730-2335
ESCAPE Family Resource Center	713-942-9500
Harris County Psychiatric Center	713-741-5000
Jewish Family Service	713-667-9336
Mental Health Association	713-522-5161
MHMRA of Harris County	713-970-7070
NAMI Metro Houston	281-579-3750
United Way of Texas Gulf Coast	211 or 713-957-4357

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