



Why It Takes THREE Parents to Properly Raise Kids



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Tag-team parenting means there's no shortage of attention and guidance and zero resentment.

I was incredibly relieved when my children went back to school this week. That's because this was the first summer I didn't pay someone to shuttle them to activities, take hikes, and make pottery while I worked.

Ever since I had children, I've worked for myself, finding time to complete assignments and interview sources before they woke for their morning feeding or after they finally settled into sleep in the evening.

Basically, I spent about a decade of my children's early years exhausted, sleep-working and trying to have a life with the help of equally nontraditional working spouses.

I say spouses because there's my first [husband](#) (my children's father), and my current husband (my children's stepfather). We're the quintessential non-traditional modern American family, and I can honestly say we tag-team parent to make sure the four children (three are mine, one is his) get what they need between the three of us.

Tag-team parenting is a [parenting style](#) term created by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, to refer to parents who work alternating schedules, taking turns at both paid employment and child care, according to a recent [New York Magazine](#) article by Oz Spies.

He writes that it's a work-parenting distribution that's on the rise, with more than a quarter of two-income [couples](#) including an adult with a nonstandard schedule (i.e., not 9-to-5, so the children are covered at all times).

Our situation has evolved over the years, just as my marital standing has. In marriage number one, I was a stay-at-home writer, author, and adjunct college professor to my first husband's freelance musician career. We were literally like passing ships — people saw him with the kids, they saw me with the kids, but they rarely saw all of us together.

When we got divorced, the kids were 2, 4 and 6, and if you can believe it, the [divorce](#) helped this tag-team setup. While the kids were with him, I worked hard and long, and when they came home they were my focus.

I cherished my every-other-weekend freedom because that's when I could fit in assignments, grade papers, and pitch new stories to editors.

A couple years later, I met Dan and realized how hard it was to single-parent, even as a tag team. Dan and I have been **married** now for four years, and I like to joke that it takes three parents to get our kids to school.

This fall, we have four kids in four different schools, but I don't need a carpool because between my ex, my husband and I, we've got it covered.

One of the perks of three-parent tag-teaming is that all of us have a little bit of free time interspersed between work and parenting responsibilities. And now that my kids are older, exercise, manicures, or walk-and-talks are things I share with them, too.

Since those early chaotic years, I've evolved into public relations, running a small company from my home office. I employ other working moms who understand the idea of flex-work. I tell them they don't have to answer emails they receive every other Saturday when my kids are at their dad's house, and I know they're not going to answer calls after 3 PM on a school day.

My husband does work a 9-to-5, but he has a lot of flex time. He can arrive a little late after dropping off his daughter and my younger son, and he can leave a little early to pick someone up from school. When one of the kids has a doctor appointment, there's a good chance all three of us can make it (though we rarely all do).

I still cherish my kid-free weekends and early mornings, if only because I have uninterrupted quiet time. This summer was the first time I didn't have help from a neighborhood teen and though I got work done, it was certainly a juggle.

Somehow, I managed to get all essential client and writing work done and still take the kids kayaking, berry-picking, and to the pool.

I felt incredibly grateful that I could evolve my work schedule to spend a little more time with the kids; you can bet those limited work hours were pushed to the max so I could play.

I know a couple who divide activities according to their strengths. One partnership features the more athletic parent handling all sports activities, while the more entrepreneurial parent manages homework and religious education.

My ex focuses heavily on religious education, while I cover sports, nature, and artistic activities. My husband inculcates the kids in political rhetoric and advocacy, along with home improvement projects. Between the three of us, we present renaissance parenting, which none of us could achieve alone.

My mother was stay-at-home throughout my childhood, yet I remember my adolescent free time filled with exploration, discovery, and not a lot of parental presence. Yet, she was there every day after school to make us snacks, listen to our daily report, and cart us to tennis, dance and Hebrew school.

One of the downsides of such hands-on parenting is that our kids don't have much free time and space to roam like we did. It's somewhat of a shock to the three of us when they pull away into their own wanderings, which kids need to do as they mature.

By far, the biggest benefit of such devoted parenting is the confidence I see in my kids. They all know that there's someone (three, in fact) there to listen to them, to hug them, or to run out at 8 PM the night before the first day of school to buy binders we forgot to get in August.

Tag-team parenting means there's no shortage of attention and guidance, no abandonment, no one forgotten, and no resentment from those of us at the helm. I can breathe, strike a yoga pose, and watch a rerun of *Law & Order* without worry that I'm neglecting my kids.

Happy parents lead to happy families. As far as I'm concerned, that's the best recipe for turning these kids into adults who succeed in the world without worry, anxiety, or self-doubt.