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8 Easy Ways I Make Living Well Work...well, NOW 9!

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School lunches, laundry, errands, work, extracurriculars, cooking, cleaning, bills...sound familiar? When the list goes on and on and time seems to end too soon, us moms have to take matters into our own hands!

I get it, easier said than done. Keeping up with it all can make a mama mad...in a crazy kind of way!

While our lists may contain varying content, I'm sure we suffer from the same kind of exhaustion at the end of each hurried day. The list remains undone, last week's laundry washed but still piled high and not put away, papers cluttering a corner on the kitchen counter and closets needing cleaning. (I'm working on all that....)

It's okay, really. I always say perfection is not plausible!

***But, preparedness IS*.** And being prepared is the main component in how I lead a busy life without letting healthy habits slide. While I try to allow for some flexibility and definitely some variety, there are certain non-negotiable practices that set me up for success in keeping myself and my children healthy.

I thought that now might be an opportune time to share some of my biggies with you. Maybe you'll be able to choose a couple items from my list to adopt as your own! You'll notice that some of them directly relate to healthy choices, such as eating and exercise, while others don't seem to at all. But, for me, they are ALL tied to maintaining sanity and allowing me to have the time and mindfulness to make good choices in the moment. So, here's how I prepare for my version of living well:

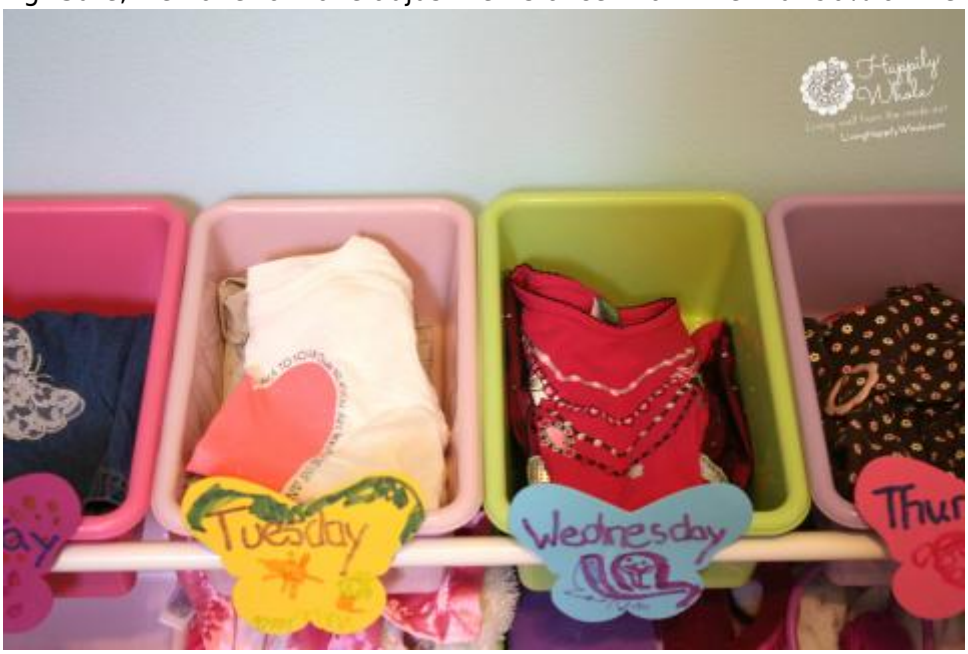
1. **Slow Sundays (part 1):** I DO NOT COOK on Sunday for Sunday meals. Nope...instead, I set out simple items from the fridge including leftovers and healthy snacks. We are allowed to graze....all day. Why do I do this in lieu of the traditional Sunday meal? Because it allows me some prep time [1] in the kitchen. I chop veggies, prepare containers with my smoothie ingredients, soak beans, hard boil several eggs, make some muffins, pack a couple school lunches [1], slice/grate cheese and even prepare baggies with on-the-go-snacks. And wa-la! The rest of the week all the sudden got a little simpler.Now, mind you, I don't do ALL of those things on a single Sunday. But, always at least a few.



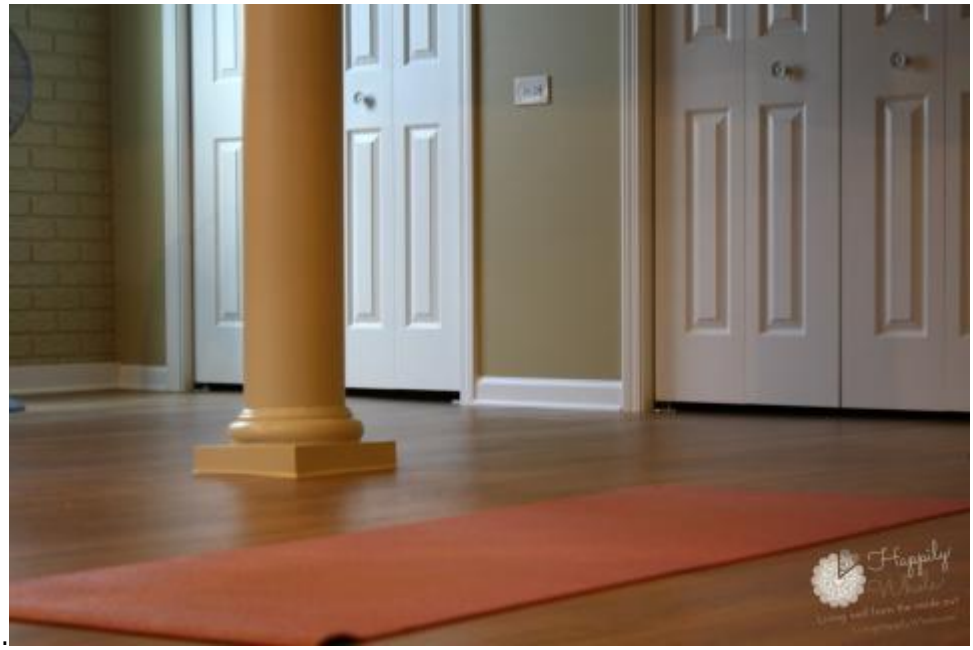
2. **Slow Sundays (part 2):** If at all in my power, we spend Sunday evenings at home having either a game or movie night. After all the obligations and kitchen prepping are done, it's time to relax and charge up for a well-rested Monday. It makes all the difference for us!
3. ***2015 UPDATE: Ummm...Slow Sundays must now be revised. I suddenly have a husband who comes with the three most lovely girls. This means family meals (according to their tradition, which I really do love!) and running back and forth to youth group meetings on Sundays for each of the girls' ages. So, now my weekdays are restructured a bit and by biggest adjustment was doing more 'on purpose' meal planning. I determine what we will eat during the week and actually schedule in when it will be prepared. Most Sundays I have time to at least get a batch of muffins and granola made for breakfasts and many Mondays I have a couple afternoon hours for making a couple main-dishes (casseroles are perfect for evenings on the run...pop them in the oven, set the timer and come home to a hot meal!)***
4. **Double it up:** Whenever I make a meal that can be easily doubled, I do. We usually have leftovers from just one recipe because my family is small. But, by doubling a recipe, I have enough to freeze for another week. I buy BPA free plastic or aluminum freezer containers and freeze almost anything! That way, for rushed evenings, I plan to take a meal out of the freezer and thaw it in the

fridge one to two days before I want to serve it up. This works well with casseroles, pancakes [2], waffles [3], soups [4], baked goods [5], and even stir fries [6].

5. **Keep a list going:** I always have an open ended list of household or food supplies I'm running short on so that I don't have to frantically make a list last minute when it's time for errands. It's on my fridge and I've disciplined myself to stop what I am doing to jot down whatever item I need the moment I think of it. I've learned my brain won't retain it! Having a running list prevents multiple runs to the store each week.
6. **Pick the wardrobe out weekly:** Yes, I said weekly. Sometime over the weekend, we take a look at the weather forecast and choose outfits for the girls' upcoming week. They each have 5 small plastic bins in their closets, one labeled for each day Monday through Friday. No discussions about what to wear in the morning! Sure, we have to make adjustments once in a while. But 90% of the time, this works, Ladies!



7. **Pack bags early:** This means making sure my girls' backpacks are packed the night before, their ballet bags are pre-packed almost immediately after class for the next one (unless clothes need washing) and even my work items I need are packed for the next day. That way a morning can consist of a healthy breakfast (often including one of those frozen items from a double batch of muffins [7]or pancakes [2]and fruit or a smoothie), pausing for a prayer and a nice calm ride off to school.
8. **Rise Before the Sun:** Yes, I know, we are not all morning girls. But, this is a practice I stick to almost religiously. Having time for myself in the morning is absolutely essential for us to have a good day as a family. I wake between 5am and 5:15am so that I can read a devotion and get a workout [8]in before the girls wake at about 6:30. As I shower, they dress (with their pre-picked clothes from the day's bin). Not for everyone, perhaps, but it's a sanity saver and spiritual essential

for me. 

9. **RELAX and Unwind:** Ah, yes. I do not work late into the night or even after the girls go to bed (unless absolutely necessary). I often have a little glass of wine and listen (uh…or…dance) to music while I make dinner. We eat together and once dishes are cleaned up and we're all packed up for the next day, it's down time! We read, I might fold a little laundry, the girls might watch a short program or sometimes we go outside. While we don't have a ton of time to relax before bed (maybe 30 to 45 minutes depending on the evening), this is one of my most essential prepping ahead points. You cannot be effective if you work around the clock. So, living well as a busy mom means preparing yourself through taking time to relax.

So there you have it! When my life is too rushed, I find it next to impossible to truly live well day to day. While it takes time and a bit of organization to prep ahead, I promise it is worth it. It actually frees time up for when I need to attend to last minute things that come up and I can appreciate daily life so much more! Plus, you'll be training up your little ones to handle the hustle bustle of life while stressing less.

I'm interested, what do YOU do to make life a little easier? Let me know if any of these things work for you!

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