

Transcribed from the Family Album Radio Program, a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at familyalbumradio.org

Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.

Working Couples Adjust Job Hours¹

Suzanna Smith²

When I went back to work in the weeks or months after my babies were born, I could see the disapproving looks on the faces of some of my family and friends. Since my husband was working too, some of my peers assumed that we would simply not be able to give my babies the time and attention they needed.

This concern about whether working parents are shortchanging their children is widespread. Recent research shows that working couples do adjust their job schedules somewhat, cutting back on their total, combined work hours "when they have children at home" (Gerson & Jacobs, 2006, p. 355). Using U.S. Census data, sociologists Kathleen Gerson and Jerry Jacobs compared total work time of couples with and without children. In 2000, dual-earner couples with children worked about three hours less per week than two-income families without children. And the more children a couple has, the fewer total hours they work (Gerson & Jacobs, 2006).

It's not surprising, but generally it's mothers, not fathers, who cut back their work hours. In 2000, working mothers were on the job four hours less per week than married women without children. "Fathers actually work more hours when they have children at home" (Gerson & Jacobs, 2006, p. 355).

1. This document is FAR5053, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published March 2009. In the interest of time or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Suzanna Smith, associate professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service; Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida; Gainesville 32611.

While work hours alone don't predict the quality of family life and child well-being, these researchers suggest that children are not necessarily neglected when parents work. Employed parents seem to adjust their work hours to make time for their family life.

Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life. "Family Album" is a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our Web site at <http://www.familyalbumradio.org>.

To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/444.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/444.wav