

# USC Center for Work & Family Life

## How to Manage Shift Work and Your Social Life

It can be difficult at times when it comes to balancing work life, family life, and sleep!

Many individuals may be experiencing one or more these issues:

- Social isolation or loneliness for you or your partner.
- Not enough time with children.
- Missing events small and large, like birthday parties and graduations.
- Decreased quality of your time with family and friends because you're tired.
- Moodiness or irritability with family and friends.
- Conflicting parenting styles, or not feeling as though you're a team as parents.
- Sleep deprivation for you or your partner, because you wish to spend time together instead of sleeping on off-hours.
- Difficulty coordinating or being part of family routines.
- Difficulty making social or family plans.

Here are ways to help you and the people in your life cope with shift work schedules:

### **Children**

- Create a visual schedule or calendar for your children, so they know what to expect. This is tremendously helpful. Explain very clearly when they will see you and do things together. Plan a weekly activity of special or routine things they can rely on and look forward to.
- Plan breaks strategically, so that you talk to your kids after school or before bedtime. Phone calls are great as well as live video calls.
- Keep small rituals in place, such as including handwritten notes in your child's lunchbox each day.
- Talk to your children and allow them to express their feelings about your absence

### **Your partner and social life**

- Have open communication with your partner. Even if it's for a small amount of time when you're home together, talk without distractions (TVs, smartphones or other electronics).
- Talk to other people who work shifts to see how they handle social and family life and share ideas.
- Allow for transition time, or time to wind down, after getting off a shift.
- Make social and family plans ahead of time, and pick a few important dates rather than overcommitting to many events.
- Inform your friends and family. You need your sleep, just like everyone else. Sometimes that means that passing on social gatherings so that you can sleep. Explain and make plans to spend some quality time with them when you're well rested.

For more information feel free to call CWFL at (213) 821-0800 or visit [www.usc.edu/worklife](http://www.usc.edu/worklife)