

# COPARENTING AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

## BEING A TEAM EVERY DAY



**COPARENTS:** Adults, recognized as a child's parents, who act and communicate to ensure the child's well-being, regardless of their parenting situation.

To balance family, work and studies, parents must constantly make adjustments to meet the demands of their professional or academic life as well as their family life. Whether this involves atypical work schedules, telework (working remotely), part-time studies or children of various ages, every family has its own reality.

Coparents do not reconcile family, work and studies individually; rather, they try to build balance into their relationship, by sharing responsibilities and being a team every day.

# 80%

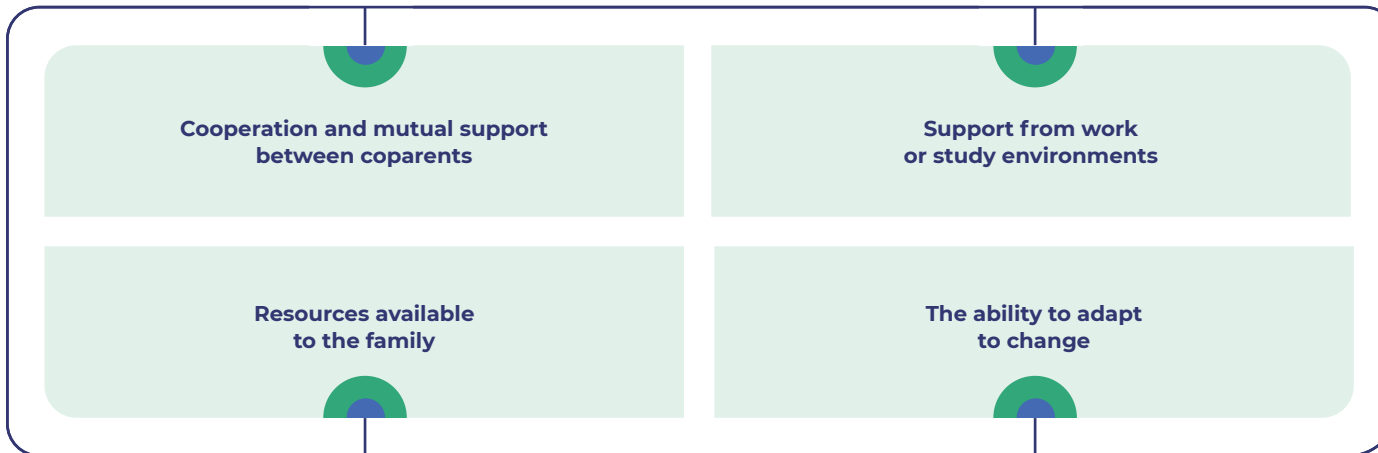
of people who changed jobs in the past two years say that the search for better work-family balance influenced their choice, and **32%** say it was the main motivation.

(Concili, 2025)

## REALITIES – What coparents experience

### Finding balance: a collective challenge

Work-family-study balance is often perceived as an individual responsibility (“getting organized,” “managing,” and “keeping up”), whereas in reality it is a collective issue, based in particular on



There is no single way to reconcile work, family and studies because every situation is different and people's realities vary over time. But one thing is clear: **When coparents talk to each other, anticipate needs and support each other, finding balance becomes much easier!**

### PLEASE ALSO SEE OUR TOOL ON COPARENTING AND TELEWORK



## Finding balance: an evolving process

Work-family-study balance changes with changing circumstances of family and professional life, and it requires constant adjustment.

### During pregnancy

Even before the baby arrives, the need to find balance begins, and parents have to deal with

- medical appointments (often during working hours)
- fatigue, complications
- absences
- planning parental leave and the return to work

This is a time when coparents begin to define expectations and roles, sometimes without realizing it. How do we get organized? How do we deal with the unexpected? How do we prepare for parental leave?

### After a child is born

The arrival of a child profoundly transforms family organization. This period is marked by

- great fatigue
- a complete reorganization of schedules
- a heavy mental load related to care, eating, sleeping and medical follow-up
- high expectations, both at home and at work

This period also quickly brings to light the dynamics of coparenting: who takes the initiative, who plans, who anticipates, who provides support.

**64%** of parents with children aged 0 to 5 experience high levels of stress related to work-family balance, compared to **59%** of all respondents who are employed parents or caregivers.

(Concillivi, 2025)

### Returning to work or study

Returning to work after parental leave is one of the most demanding times for finding balance. Several challenges may arise:

- returning to an environment that has evolved (new technologies, change of personnel)
- a return that is moved up or postponed (pressure to return to work, a place in a childcare service, school/university calendar)
- a new pace of life
- an increased mental load

### Daycare, school and family life

As children grow, their needs and requirements change, and so does the need for balance. Coparents experience

- their child's adaptation to a new environment (daycare, school)
- managing drop-offs and pick-ups
- homework and school follow-up
- extracurricular activities
- developmental and emotional transitions
- managing the unexpected (illness, appointments)

### Older children and teenagers

The need to find balance does not disappear when children grow older. Rather, it takes on other forms:

- managing student job schedules
- possibly giving more frequent lifts
- planning extracurricular, medical and social activities
- different support and guidance needs, e.g.,
  - emotional support
  - managing school stress
  - guiding them towards autonomy

According to a study conducted in 2023, having a child who is or may be working has led to conflict between spouses for **17%** of the parents surveyed.

(Réseau pour un Québec Famille, 2023)

### Life changes

Life changes (separation, blended families, moving, the arrival of a new partner, new role as a caregiver, etc.) can make finding balance more complex. In these contexts, coparents often have to deal with

- variable custody times
- several children and calendars to coordinate
- different work environments and parenting styles
- new family responsibilities

While **68%** of parents say they feel comfortable using work-family balancing measures, this proportion drops to **58%** in the case of caregivers.

(Concillivi, 2026)



## WINNING PRACTICES FOR BALANCING WORK, FAMILY, AND STUDIES BETWEEN COPARENTS

Winning practices mainly revolve around anticipating needs, communication, fair sharing and mutual support.

### ANTICIPATING NEEDS TOGETHER: PREPARING INSTEAD OF IMPROVISING

For many families, the challenges of finding balance don't come down to a lack of willpower, but just the complexity of the day-to-day realities involved. Experience shows that finding balance is generally smoother when co-parents take the time to

- discuss schedules, responsibilities and constraints early on
- plan for the unexpected
- anticipate each transition (home > daycare > school, etc.)
- plan ahead for more difficult periods in your career
- take into account periods of availability (vacations, quieter weeks, business travel)

Anticipating needs helps to reduce mental load proactively. The idea is not to plan everything down to the last detail, but to avoid constant last-minute solutions, a source of conflict and inequality.

### FIND OUT ABOUT AND DISCUSS THE WORK-FAMILY-STUDY RIGHTS AND MEASURES THAT ARE AVAILABLE

Many parents aren't well informed as to their rights or are unaware that they can discuss and negotiate adjustments with their employers. Finding good balance often starts with a good knowledge of the resources available, both from the government and the workplace. As parents, it is important to

#### 1. Identify the jurisdiction applicable to your employment

Find out which labour laws apply to each of you (e.g., the *Act respecting labour standards* [provincial jurisdiction] or the *Canada Labour Code* [federal jurisdiction])

#### 2. Find out about the measures provided for by law or by the various programs.

Know the minimum you are entitled to (e.g., parental leave and Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), leave and authorized absences for family reasons or pregnancy)

#### 3. Start a dialogue with your employer or school

Ask your employers questions and find out about the additional measures available to you (e.g., internal policies, leaves, absences and possible accommodations)

#### 4. Take stock with the coparent

Compare your realities, the measures available and the leeway each of you has to anticipate, make informed choices and better share family responsibilities

Useful resources:

- CNESST website
- Éducaloi website
- QPIP website

### SHARING TASKS AND THE MENTAL LOAD

Work-life balance is as much about "what is done" as it is about "what needs to be thought out, anticipated and planned." Thinking about appointments, school supplies, lunches, schedules, the unexpected, etc., is an often invisible job in itself. Certain practices will encourage more equitable sharing between coparents, such as

- drafting a complete list of visible and invisible tasks (domestic, organizational, school, etc.)
- acknowledging what everyone is already doing, including planning and coordination
- identifying imbalances
- allocating responsibilities, taking into account everyone's constraints, schedules and abilities
- readjusting this breakdown when contexts change (telework, new schedules, studies)
- being alert to situations where inequalities are likely to arise, for example when one parent is at home more often



### CONCRETE WAYS TO LIGHTEN THE MENTAL LOAD

#### Ask yourself a few key questions together:

- Who's thinking about what, and when?
- Who anticipates deadlines, needs and the unexpected?
- What could be shared, simplified or automated?

#### Best practices

- Write down what needs to be done, to get the tasks down on paper
- Automate certain tasks (alerts, calendars, reminders)
- Allocate complete responsibilities, not micro-tasks (e.g., "manage meals" rather than "go grocery shopping.")
- Agree to delegate and let the other parent do things in their own way
- Identify recurring irritants and find lasting solutions

Acknowledging the mental load is often the first step towards a better balance between coparents. Sharing it is a major driver for finding good balance.



## COMMUNICATE EARLY, OFTEN AND CLEARLY

Addressing work-family-study balance issues during pregnancy, when returning to work or during major transitions can help prevent imbalances and better prepare for future challenges. Regular communication is the key to successful finding good balance and to harmonious coparenting. Parents who collaborate effectively take the time to

- set times for discussion
- talk to each other ahead of the changes to come
- name their limits without guilt
- clearly tell each other when they need help and when they can offer it
- make sure they understand each other's needs
- clarify expectations to avoid misunderstandings

## SEE FINDING BALANCE AS TEAMWORK

Finding balance cannot be the responsibility of one parent alone. It must be part of a cooperative approach, in which each coparent contributes. This involves

- acknowledging the other parent's professional or educational realities
- considering that task distribution need not be equal (50/50), but that it must be and remain equitable
- making adjustments when a parent is having a tougher time
- reviewing the breakdown of responsibilities as needed, on a temporary or permanent basis

The simple fact of "feeling part of the same team" can profoundly transform the experience of finding balance.

## SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND ACKNOWLEDGE EACH OTHER'S EFFORTS

The realities of work, family and school are constantly changing. A parent may be going through a more demanding period, just as a child may require more presence. Mutual support can take many forms, including

- being alert to signs of fatigue or overload in the other parent
- offering respite or temporarily adjusting task distribution
- taking over when possible, without waiting for the other person to "crack"
- explicitly acknowledging the efforts made
- avoiding judgment, especially in times of stress or exhaustion

When a parent feels seen, supported and acknowledged, it changes everything!

## TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR COPARENTS

Good work-family-study balance often relies on simple, accessible shared tools. The experts and parents consulted recommend using resources that facilitate communication, planning and the division of responsibilities.

### Organization tools

- Shared digital calendars (Google Calendar, Cozi, OurFamilyWizard): useful for keeping track of schedules, appointments, custody periods, exams and activities
- Collaborative task lists (Excel, Microsoft To Do, Trello, Notion): for distributing responsibilities and reducing the invisible mental load
- Shared documents (Word, Excel, Drive): handy for establishing a clear division of tasks, drawing up lists of school items or planning the year

### Information and support resources

- Government guides to parental rights and leave
- Information on work-family-study balance policies in the workplace
- Community organizations and family support services
- Personal network: family, friends, relatives, neighbours, etc.

Consult the Concilivi and Réseau pour un Québec Famille directory of community, support and mutual aid resources designed to facilitate work-family balance in Quebec: <https://www.concilivi.com/fr/repertoire-ressources-cft>



## WINNING PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYERS AND MANAGERS

Workplaces play a major role in helping their workers to balance life, and some work settings really make it easier for parents to find work-family-study balance.

### Organizational culture

- Explicitly promote work-family-study balance
- Normalize parents' needs (absences, appointments, the unexpected)
- Train managers in work-family-study balance and good support practices

### Practices

- Telework (working remotely)
- Flexible or variable working hours
- Possibility of temporarily adjusting the workload (e.g., return from leave, pregnancy, exam period for student parents)
- Paid leave (illness, appointments)
- Planning for periods of heavy workload, taking parental realities into account
- Available measures clearly explained
- Open and regular dialogue with employees about their needs and abilities



## BENEFITS

Parents who are able to balance their work with their lives report a number of positive effects on their daily lives and well-being.

### FOR PARENTS

#### Feel less pressure and are not so overwhelmed

When responsibilities are discussed and shared, parents feel less alone when faced with the demands of everyday life. Knowing that the other parent is involved and attentive reduces stress and the feeling of having to “carry all the load.”

#### Smoother, more realistic organization

Regular discussion between coparents helps to adapt family organization to current realities. This flexibility helps deal with the unexpected and reduces conflicts over schedules and responsibilities.

#### Better personal balance

When finding balance is better shared, it becomes easier to free up time for oneself, to recuperate or to invest in other areas of life. This time contributes to the parents' well-being and emotional availability.

#### A stronger sense of parenting ability

Collaboration and mutual acknowledgement strengthen parents' confidence in their ability to play their role. Feeling supported and heard promotes a more positive parenting experience.

Sources:

- Concilivi. (2025). *Sondage auprès des travailleurs(-euses) du Québec ÉDITION 2025*, Sondage Léger réalisé auprès de parents ou de personnes proches aidantes en emploi du Québec, Rapport d'analyse. <https://sl.yapla.com/media/CPYStpVCZIXk8RXwzml7VUy/2025-concilivi-sondage-employes-rapport.pdf>
- Concilivi. (20 January, 2026). *Briser le tabou de la proche aide au travail*, Press release. <https://www.concilivi.com/fr/communiqués/briser-le-tabou-proche-aide-travail>
- Réseau pour un Québec Famille. (2023). *Perception des parents québécois sur le travail des enfants*, Sondage Léger, Rapport d'analyse. <https://sl.yapla.com/media/CPYStpVCZIXk8RXwzml7VUy/15939-013-rapport-rqf-final.pdf>

Participants in the *Coparentalité et Conciliation* video clips (five filmed interviews):

- Tremblay, D.-G. (2025). Ph.D., CHRP, Professor, Université TÉLUQ, specialist in work organization, human resources management and labour economics/ sociology.
- Vachon Croteau, C. (2025). CHRP, M.Sc., Executive Director, Réseau pour un Québec Famille / Concilivi
- The parents: Erika and Charles, Marianne and Faty, Karine and James.

Parental cooperation in the process of finding balance can have positive effects on children.

### FOR CHILDREN

- More stable routines
- Better supported transitions
- More available parents
- Calmer family climate
- Consistency of parental messages

Workplaces that support parents in finding balance also benefit.

### WORK ENVIRONMENTS

- Employers benefit: productivity, retention, a more people-centric work climate, thanks to employees being
- less stressed
  - more focused and mentally available
  - more committed to their workplace
  - less at risk of burnout

Balancing work, family and studies is a daily challenge for many parents. The aim is not to achieve perfect balance, but to try to build, over time, a way of doing things that respects everyone's needs.

By working together, parents can find ways to preserve their own and their children's well-being and arrive at a more harmonious relationship with their workplaces.



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