

Make Shiftwork Work for You

Strategies for Shiftworkers

Safety on the Home Front

Leaving your home and family during nighttime hours can cause worry and stress. Ease your mind and keep your home safe and secure with these tips:

Install a home security system or get a dog to guard the house at night.

Talk to your coworkers about forming a family network—spouses and partners of night workers can check in with each other regularly and be valuable contacts in case of emergency.

Leave house keys with a neighbor or friend who can check on your home when you're not there, provide entry if you lock yourself out, and let him or herself in if there's an emergency.

You may also want to get a pager or cell phone so family members can contact you easily at any hour.

Tasty Surprise

Plan a late-night pizza or ice cream snack with your family after your shift ends—a great way to connect and a special occasional treat for children who love the illicit pleasure of staying up late.

Shiftwork Perks

If you're a shiftworker, you can

- ...go to the gym, swim in a community pool or get a squash or tennis court during off-peak hours
- ...run errands when there are no lines
- ...attend parent-teacher conferences or school events during the day without taking time off work
- ...bond with coworkers who share your unconventional schedule
- ...make appointments for checkups, dental visits, haircuts and other services during less crowded times

Plus, some "night owls" choose shiftwork because it gives them the chance to enjoy the hours they like best. Are you one of them? Find ways to connect with others who share your schedule.



5-Minute Fresh Starts

Developing new relationships and keeping existing ones strong takes a little extra effort and communication. Take one of these steps today:

1. **Call a friend or family member** you have not talked to recently.
2. **Resolve an old conflict** by talking through differences and resolving to start fresh.
3. **Introduce yourself** to one new person.

Ways to Relax, Recharge & Feel Great

So, you have some free time? Turn off the TV, get off the couch and have some fun with these creative (and low-cost) ideas:

Take the dog for a run in the park (make sure you get moving, too).

Organize a midnight dinner party for yourself and others who share your schedule.

Take your family on a picnic, or have an impromptu indoor "picnic" on the floor in the living room.

Take a walk with your partner or a friend.

Organize a touch football, soccer, basketball or softball game with friends (or your kids and their friends).

Write a letter in longhand.

Make a scrapbook with your children or grandchildren.

Try a new recipe.

Explore a new neighborhood ... on foot, by bike or on in-line skates.

Visit the library and check out something you've never read before, perhaps an ethnic cookbook, a historical novel or a biography.

The key: Have fun! Engage your body and your brain in something challenging and different. You'll find yourself with renewed energy and will return to work ready to meet any challenge.

Get Connected

If you work nights or a rotating schedule, you may sometimes feel isolated and alone. Since much of the world still is awake during the day and asleep at night, finding creative ways to spend time with your family and friends is a must.

Communicate. Talk about problems as they arise instead of bottling them up until they boil over. Help your loved ones understand your schedule, and that the limited time you have to spend with them is nothing personal, but a result of your job.

Tip: Find creative ways to keep in touch. Install a bulletin board in the kitchen or near the front door where family members can post messages to each other. Use technology to your advantage; invest in a cell phone or pager so you can be reached easily and arrange times to talk.

Think quality, not quantity. Don't wait until you have a whole day off or hours to spare to spend time with those you care about. Make the time, every day.

Tip: Plan "dates" that fit your schedule. For example, if you work nights and your spouse works days, have breakfast together once a week. Meet on the sofa for a video and a bowl of popcorn before you leave for the late shift. Even a daily 15-minute phone conversation to catch up on the day's events helps you feel connected and keeps your relationship healthy and strong.

