

Have fun first | Christin Smith Myers

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I know I'm not the only person to wake up with a to-do list scrolling through my head. Those of you who share the affliction might be proud of what you get done, but are you spending your time on the right things? I often say no to fun requests - whether playing a board game with my daughter, reading with my son, or watching a funny video with my husband - because first I have to empty the dishwasher, switch the laundry, or send the email.

In the moment, this decision feels right, but as soon as I step back - or put it on paper - it feels slightly crazy to me. The dishwasher before a game with my 10-year-old? Seriously? What signal does that send about my values and how much I value her? Not the signal I want to send. And way too often I put so many productive things on my list that I never get to the game at all. Or my daughter loses interest by the time I'm ready. Talk about a lost opportunity for connection!

I do the same thing to myself. There's a book I want to read, a phone call I want to make, or songs I want to download and sing but I put all my "shoulds" in front of my "wants" and I end up feeling resentful. Yet there's no one to blame but me. I'm the one making the choices. And - surprise - the to-do list is always there. I'm never fully caught up because the emails keep coming and we keep making dishes dirty.

I noticed how often I was telling my kids, my husband and myself, "Just a minute" or "I can't right now" and I didn't like it. So I decided to establish "Have fun first" as one of my [personal commandments](#). Being clear about this objective reminds me I have a choice. Yes, work needs to be done, but sometimes it can wait. And if I choose to work on the to-do list first, I tell myself, "I'm choosing this" so I don't feel like a victim. And then I'm more likely to embrace whatever I'm doing, rather than resent it.

We don't talk about the change, but I think my kids notice and appreciate the difference. I'm feeling more connected to them and my husband and I'm also feeling more relaxed. The most important things still get done and in fact, sometimes I accomplish more because having fun energizes me. A bonus is that the kids are also a lot more likely to help if I've already invested time in them. Win-win!

If you're a chronic over-achiever, consider having fun first. It's made a difference for me.