

Top Five⁺¹ Hints for Family Survival

To family and friends:

“It’s hectic, it’s crazy, it’s disorganized, it’s scary, but in the same breath it’s fun and rewarding!”

“The hectic schedule is all I could think of before I started. With three kids under 10 it was always going to be hard, but I’m determined to do it. The other thing was to enjoy the last of my freedom before I began and that was the end for the next three years!”

“Family conversations about uni are varied and generally good as it assists all of us to talk about the process and problems. We always try to talk about these things as a family is all about support - and this is support”.

	Practical support	What our study participants said:
1	Cook a meal (... or three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mum was very helpful and cooks me some meals to take down to uni during the week. (Female student, 18-21)• My husband is happy to cook when I'm working on an essay in the last week prior to due date (Female student, 40-50)• I have no social life at all during the semesters and luckily my husband not only works but organises family meals most of the time (Female student, 40-50, mother of two teenagers)
2	Help out with household duties (especially around due dates or exams)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I used to cook clean wash etc, and now I am away for class and work so much that I do not have time for these things every day. My family has had to learn to cook and clean and wash. (Female student, 30-40 years old, mother of three children)• I do not have much time to complete tasks such as cooking dinner or cleaning and so have to rely on other family members to help me out. (Female student, 21-25)• Had to make adjustments at home, such as minimizing distractions such as TV and household chores such as yard maintenance. (Male student, 40-50)• My children have taken on a more committed role in household duties. They now have allocated duties and are able to cook/clean. My children are expected to be more independent as I am unable to drive them around/pick up from the school bus etc. (Female student 40-50, mother of two children)

	Practical support	What our study participants said:
3	Watch the kids, do the taxi-run	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I depend on my neighbour to look after my children of a morning as the times for uni aren't exactly family friendly. (Female student, 40-50, mother of two children) • My husband has had to take on a lot more responsibility when it comes to cooking dinner and picking up the kids and taking them to out school sport training. (Female student, 40-50, mother of two children)
4	Be mindful of 'stress times' - especially around due dates and exams (i.e. tip-toe and give them 'thinking space')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My family has trouble being quiet whilst I'm trying to do readings and lectures! (Female student, 30-40) • I always get ahead on my studies prior to school holidays so that I have less to do when my children are at home, but they must accept that when I am studying I am not "free" and they need to give me some peace and quiet. I still feel guilty at times when I am studying and they want to go places and do things, but I do try to fit it in. (Female student, mother of three children) • My husband is very supportive and our children know that mum has gone back to school and sometimes just needs half an hour to get things done. (Female student, 30-40, mother of two children) • When I say I am studying, and because my family do not really understand ... how intense this is, they don't think to NOT bother me with their issues. (Female student, 40-50) • I discuss my studies, mainly saying that I have a lot to do so I'll be in hiding for the next few days!!! :) (Female student, 21-25)
5	Celebrate their achievements: big or small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They actually took us out for dinner to celebrate some of the marks I got, which is really nice. (Female student, 30-40) • My kids are immensely proud of me, and the results I have achieved ... I earned a HD in law and a D in Sociology. Its probably the first time in my life that I have received an acknowledgment for anything...I can't even explain how that made me feel! (Female student, 40-50, mother of two children) • We'll celebrate ... just at home ... A bottle of wine and a nice dinner or something (Male student, 30-40) • What we've decided, next year, we were saving up to go on a holiday when she graduates from uni ... we're all going over to Fiji ... I think there's nine of us going now. (Mother of Elle, a single mum of three children) • Mum has done really well in her exams and presentations. We have a tradition of a special dinner for great results and we do this for mum too. (15 year old daughter of student) • I definitely tell mum and dad because they do like to hear... well they might not like to hear about what's happened during the week but they like to hear about the results ...you know, "You've worked so hard. I know you've worked hard. What did you get on it?" (Male student, 20-25)
+1	Come and experience the uni environment for yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She came when we went to the information day. And she came on the day that I enrolled, when I had my photo taken and she thought it was just wonderful. (Female student, 60+) • ... because it was orientation day, Mum thought it was unreal and I suppose it's like every Wednesday with the music and the food and the shopping ... I think that's what the biggest impact on mum was... she was like "Wow, it's so like a community". (Female student, 20-25) • I really hope they come up for the graduation ... I can't imagine them missing out on something like that. (Male student, 20-25) • Yes I've been on campus on plenty of occasions. I generally find university experience a positive experience because it is something I am familiar with and aligns with my values and priorities. (Male partner of student, 40-50)