HOW TO HAVE A BRILLIANT CAREER WHEN YOU HAVE KIDS

PRACTICAL, IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS



WHEN YOUR CAREFULLY PLANNED WORK WEEK MEETS REAL LIFE



You can be doing everything you can to build momentum at work, then one curveball knocks the whole plan sideways.

A sick child. Childcare falling through. A train that doesn’t get you home in time. Suddenly you’re rearranging meetings, apologising, trying to keep things moving and wondering how everyone else seems to make it work.

And when you're trying to build your career, it can feel like you're constantly having to choose between moving forward at work and keeping everything going at home.

Well it’s not just you.

If you’ve ever felt like everyone else is somehow managing the work/parenting juggle better than you, they probably aren’t.



Sick children, nursery closures, childcare falling through and travel chaos can knock even the most organised working parent’s plans sideways.

And too often, the response is:

“This is just how it is for a few years.”

But those “few years” can be important ones for your career.

You shouldn’t have to put your ambition on hold until the curveballs stop coming.

This is much bigger than you.

The impact of becoming a parent doesn't just show up in the odd chaotic working day. For many women, it changes the course of their career.

The Careers After Babies report found:

- **85% of women leave full time work within three years of having children**
- **19% leave the workforce entirely, 26% reduce their hours**
- **and there is a 32% drop off in women at managerial level after becoming mothers**

The working-parent juggle has real consequences for careers.



I SHOULD PROBABLY INTRODUCE MYSELF PROPERLY.

I'm Zoe, mum to River who is 5 and founder of MoveThru.
I help professional parents stay in and progress in the careers they've worked so hard for.

Before MoveThru, I spent over 14 years managing teams and complex projects in London and New York, including almost 3 years at **Amazon Advertising,** where I went on maternity leave, returned to work and managed a busy team as a new mum.

I focus on the practical problems that can make brilliant, capable parents feel like their careers are suddenly much harder to manage. Problems like...

How do you return from maternity leave without constantly feeling on the back foot? What happens when childcare falls through? How do you build a support network when family isn't nearby? How do you keep progressing without feeling like work and family are constantly competing?

That's the stuff I help working parents and the companies that employ them, put practical plans around.



PRACTICAL PLANS FOR REAL WORKING-PARENT PROBLEMS

You shouldn't have to make your career smaller to fit your life.

And today, we're going to tackle one of the big things that can get in the way: what happens when life doesn't go to plan.



Loss of Momentum

One of the hardest parts of working parenthood can be the constant

stop/start feeling

It can feel like 2 steps forward, 1 step back.



The aim isn't to stop the curveballs. That's impossible.

You get into a rhythm at work, start making progress, then a sick child, childcare problem or something unexpected knocks the plan sideways. You rearrange, catch up, get going again... and then another curveball hits.

The aim is to have the plans and support in place so they cause as little disruption as possible and you can keep moving forward.

Ideas and solutions we'll cover today:



Prepare for the curveballs

Practical backup plans to help you manage the unexpected without everything falling apart.

Build the support around you

Preparing for curveballs with Plans B and C.
Building your village and sharing responsibilities at home.

Know when to flex

Working out what can move, what needs protecting and when it's better to change the plan

Nothing I’m taking you through is complicated

So why don’t we already do it?!

Life moves at 100mph.



Once you’re on the working-parent hamster wheel, you’re often so busy keeping everything moving that there’s barely time to stop, take stock and make the small adjustments that could make things easier.

Use this hour to do exactly that!

Curveballs are part of working parenthood

However organised you are, Plan A won't always work.

A sick child, childcare falling through, an over-running meeting or a delayed train can quickly throw carefully made plans off course.



The aim isn't to expect things to go wrong. It's to accept that sometimes they will and have a Plan B and C ready when they do.

That way, a curveball doesn't have to derail your work, relationships, social life or the things you do for yourself.

Less stopping and starting. More ability to keep things moving.

The 3 types of curveball



1. Your child needs you

Sickness, an emergency pick-up or something unexpected happens during the working day.

2. Your childcare support falls through

Nursery closes, a childminder is sick or the person you were relying on suddenly can't help.

3. Something throws your plans off

A delayed train, an over-running meeting, unexpected work travel or you getting sick.

Once you know what could knock Plan A off course, you can start building the backup.



Build your Plan A, B and C

You probably already have a Plan A.

It’s what makes your normal week work. But what happens when Plan A falls through?

Use the planner to take each of your likely curveballs and work out:

plan A

what normally happens?

plan B

what’s your first backup?

plan C

What could you call on if A and B aren’t options?

The Plan Cs are often the ones we haven’t thought about until we desperately need them.

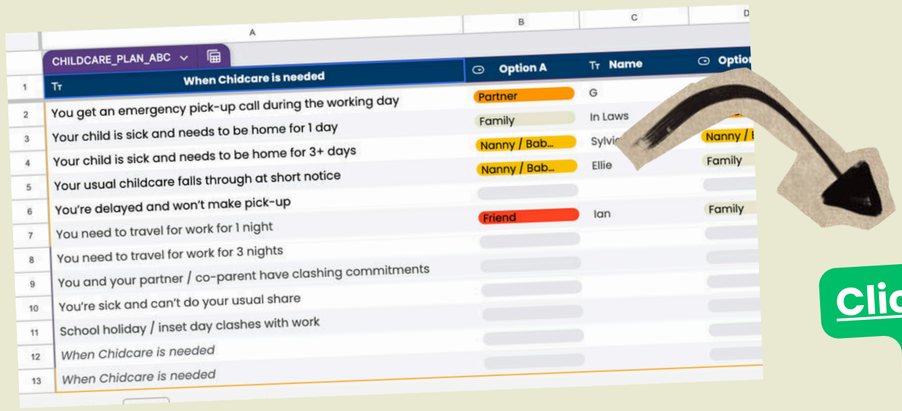
When building your backups, look for people who:

you trust

are local to you

and often available

Can’t think of anyone? Keep going. We’ll build your village next.



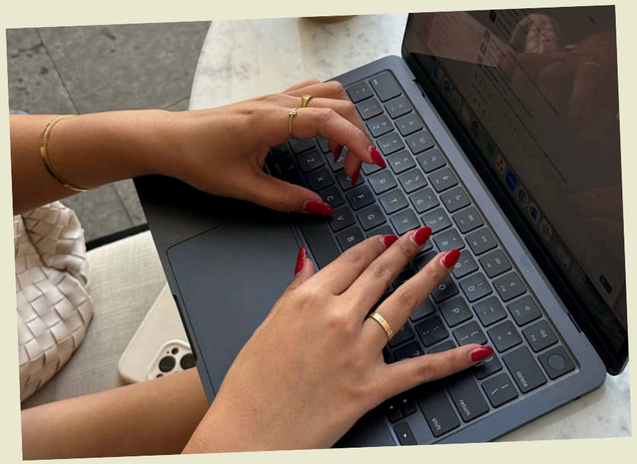
Click to access your ABC planner

*Watch the workshop recording and check the first tab of the planner for more guidance on how to get the most out of it.

Plan for the worst. Deliver the best.

When a curveball hits, our instinct can work against us.

It’s tempting to make the smallest adjustment possible and hope things get back to normal quickly. But if they don’t, you can end up changing plans, updating people and apologising all over again.



1. Plan for the realistic worst case

If your child is sent home sick, plan on the basis they might be off for a few days, rather than assuming they’ll be back tomorrow.

2. Manage expectations early

Tell the people affected what’s happened, what might change and what you’re going to prioritise. Try not to overpromise.

3. Monitor without constantly updating

If things improve or you manage to get some work done, brilliant. You don’t need to promise it upfront.

4. Then impress later

If things improve faster than expected, you can deliver more than you said. If they don’t, you’ve already created a realistic plan you can stick to.

Less scrambling. Less apologising. More breathing room.



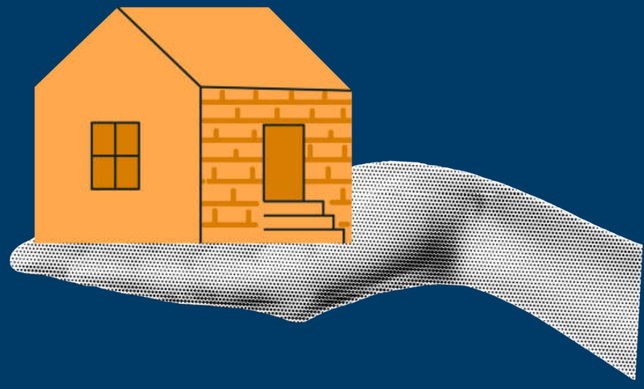
Your village might not come ready-made. But you can build one.

There’s a common idea that when you have children, a village somehow appears around you. But families look different now. You might live miles from where you grew up.

Your parents might still be working, have health problems or simply not able to help. Your friends and family might be scattered across the country or the world.

Not having a ready-made village doesn’t mean you can’t have one.

You can build your own and it can include more people than you might think.



Your village can be paid and unpaid

Aim to have 2 to 6 people you could potentially call on outside of your usual childcare arrangements.

Your village might include:

paid support

- **Babysitters**
- **Nannies**
- **Nursery staff who babysit**
- **Childminders**
- **After-school or holiday childcare**

unpaid support

- **Grandparents**
- **Siblings and other family**
- **Friends**
- **Neighbours**
- **Other parents (childcare swaps)**





Don’t just think about who you already rely on. Think about who could become part of your village.

Some support is given. Some is paid for. Both count.

Where to find your villagers



If nobody immediately springs to mind, start with these 2 places:

1 Piggyback on people you already trust

Ask whether nursery keyworkers or school teaching assistants offer babysitting. Check whether your childminder could do extra hours. Think about people your child already knows and feels comfortable with.

2 Ask people local to you

Recommendations are gold. Try your nursery, school, street or local parent WhatsApp groups and ask friends who they use and trust.

You might have more potential villagers around you than you realise.

Set your villagers up properly

Before you need to rely on someone, make sure both **you and your child feel comfortable with them** and they have everything they need. Setting up a trial before the curveball really helps as does a set of great instructions.

One thing that often gets missed is agreeing a **communication plan.**





Be clear about:

When do you want to hear from them?
What do you want to be updated about?
What can they make a call on without you?

For example, if they're looking after a sick child, you might ask them to update you if symptoms change, their temperature goes up or they haven't eaten or slept.

The aim is to trust them to take over, rather than spending the whole time checking your phone and wondering what's happening.

Turn casual offers into actual help

We've all heard or said:

"Just let me know if you ever need anything."

The problem is, most parents don't know whether you really mean it, or what they can actually ask you for.



If you're a parent

Turn a vague offer into something usable:

"You know you said you'd be happy to look after Sally if we ever needed? I'd love to take you up on that. What days or times tend to work best for you?"

If you're a manager

Make your offer specific:

"If childcare falls through, let's agree which meetings can move, what the team can cover and what really needs your attention."

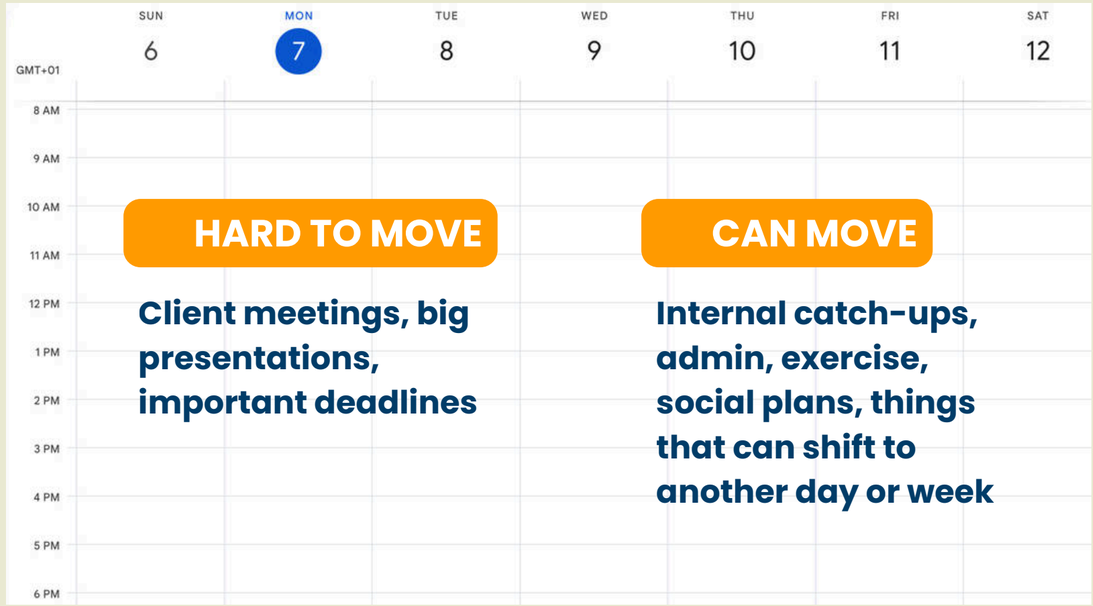
Specific support is what actually makes a difference.

Know what you can move before you need to move it

Sometimes Plan A, B *and* C fall through and **you need to change the plan**.

If you know you're heading into a period where curveballs are more likely, like starting nursery or school, make it easy to see what has some give in it.

If you have a partner or co-parent, **flag your big non-negotiables to each other** too, so you both know when the other person really needs you to be the point parent.



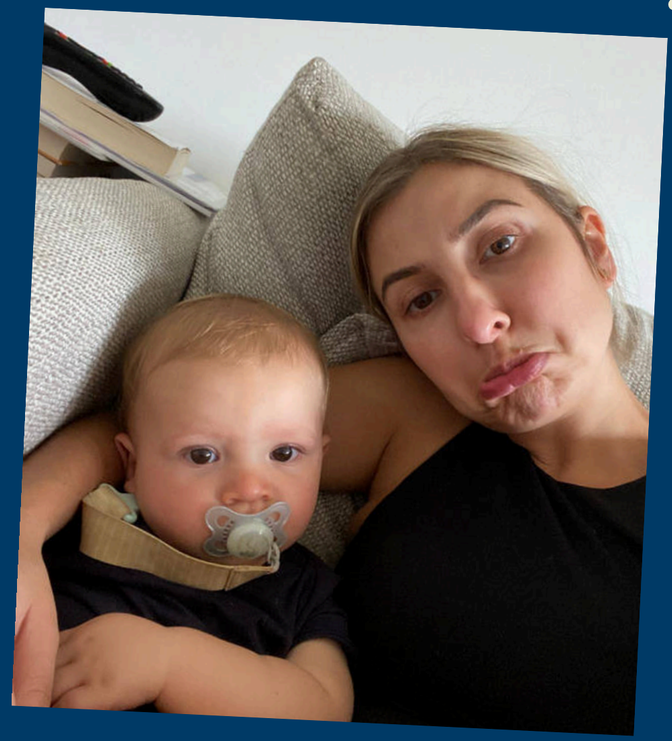
Decide what can give before you're forced to decide in the moment.

SOMETIMES THE BEST PLAN IS TO SURRENDER

Not every curveball needs solving.

Sometimes the right call is to cancel the meeting, move the plans, put a film on and be with your child.

The point of having Plans A, B and C isn't to make sure work always wins. It's to give you more choice when life doesn't go to plan.



Some days you keep things moving.
Some days you let them go. Both are OK.

Should I cancel my plans?

When the dreaded nursery or school call comes in, it can be hard to think clearly and decide what actually needs to happen next.

I created this quick decision tool to help you take some of the emotion out of that moment and work through:

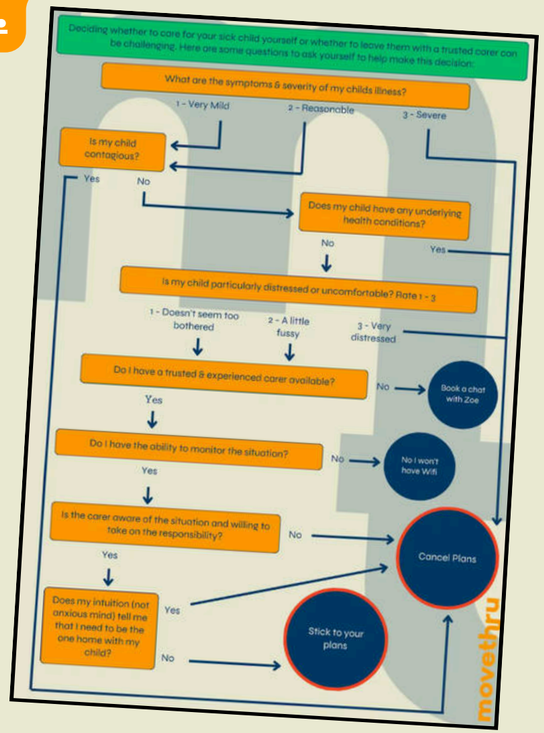
Do I need to cancel?

Can I keep working?

Or is there another option?

Access the decision matrix here.

Use it when a curveball hits to help you make a calm, practical decision about what to do next.



What's one thing you could put in place to make working parenthood easier, either for yourself or someone you work with?

For parents: Is there a backup plan you need to create, someone you could ask for help or something you could share responsibility for?

For managers: Is there a conversation you could have, an expectation you could clarify or something you could make more flexible?

THE CURVEBALLS AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE. BUT YOU CAN BE MORE READY FOR THEM.

- Have Plans B and C ready before you need them.
- Build a village you can actually rely on.
- Know what can move and what needs protecting.
- Make support specific, whether you're asking for it or offering it.

The more you have in place before things go wrong, the less you have to scramble when they do.



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Working parent tips, tools and plenty of real-life chat.

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