# **Women’s Day: The challenges of juggling work with family, from a doctor**

**Source: Parenting Desk, Economic Times**

Juggling work and parental responsibilities is no mean feat, but just like everything else there are good days and bad. Nowadays, women enjoy equal status in the world because they have successfully navigated through their struggles, all on their own, and emerged winners in their own right. People often ask me how I manage to balance my professional and personal life.

Being a lady doctor takes a lot of patience as there are plenty of struggles and we need to put in huge amounts of effort to manage every aspect of life. The most important task for a woman is to balance it out. The question that often crosses my mind is ‘Can I be a doting parent and an excellent surgeon at the same time?’ And this puts me in two different zones altogether. On the one hand, I think it is difficult for women in the medical profession, due to their demanding job requirements including overtime, odd hours and emergencies; and on the other hand, I wonder if this will stop me from being a good mother.

When the pandemic began, it also brought with it a lot of challenges in the health care sector. Coming to hospital was essential for deliveries and emergency surgeries but the good thing was that SOPs were instituted and proper protocols put in place. As we were only handling emergencies during lockdown and otherwise consulting via teleconsultation, exposure to patients was minimal. At home, I explained to my kids the struggles that the pandemic had brought with it and how we needed to now draw up our work-life boundaries while being at home.

They gradually came to terms with the new situation of staying away from me when I reached home and connecting on virtual platforms to ensure that I was with them always, even if I couldn’t physically be with them. The journey through peak Covid times was not easy for anyone and things did get tough, what with no household help and my still needing to attend hospital. That’s when I made some simple changes at home and involved everyone with little tasks to share the responsibility of household work. I utilised free time to spend more time with kids and family by playing board games, cooking together and generally having fun.

Life goes a full circle and needs us to adapt to these changes to be able to enjoy them. I am just so thankful for pulling myself out of all odds in a healthy state and of course the credit for this goes to my medical and paramedical colleagues who always strive so hard to care for patients, risking their own and family’s health.

There are times though, when I get occupied with the personal front and am unable to meet deadlines around work, CME (Continuing Medical Education) sessions and other things which make me feel that I am not dedicated enough towards my job. That’s when my family pitches in and I am free to attend to my job commitments, as when they share responsibility, it makes it easier for me to balance both my work and home. And returning to a warm home and getting a big warm hug and just some attention to my kids actually helps me unwind and strengthen my bond with them.

Things that really help me to unwind and rejuvenate are meditation, a good laugh with kids, short breaks from work and spending quality time with family. Though challenging, I feel grateful to the almighty for bestowing blessings on me to be able to see a newborn for the very first time, the joy and happiness on the parents’ faces and the icing on the cake being that I am able to get all the love and attention from my kids too!

Some easy tips to strike the work-life balance are:

**1. Focus on the Balance**

Make a conscious decision to achieve work-life balance. I have learned through my experience that it is very important to make an effort to strike that balance else it will never happen. You could request more flexible work hours or reorganise responsibilities at home.

**2. Discuss with Family**

Discuss what your family wants, get their perspective, opinions, and even objections and understand from them how exactly they would want your work hours to be arranged. This will also help in more understanding on their part.

**3. Get Help from Others**

Sometimes balance may be difficult to achieve. Work may be demanding or there is a huge project with a tight deadline. At those times, reach out to friends or family who are willing to help, are trustworthy to handle children and home.

**4. Establish Boundaries**

Creating boundaries between work and family is imperative. This will help protect work time from distraction from family as well as protect your family time from work commitments. With clear boundaries, it is easier for you to tell when your action is not in favour of one aspect of your life. So, we can avoid taking work calls at the table or engaging in household chores during work hours.

**5. Imbalance Is Sometimes Inevitable**

There will always be times that you will have to let work or family come first. To think that you can perfectly balance everything in your life at all times, is an impractical wish that would be impossible to realise. The scale may tip for some time but don’t make it a habit.