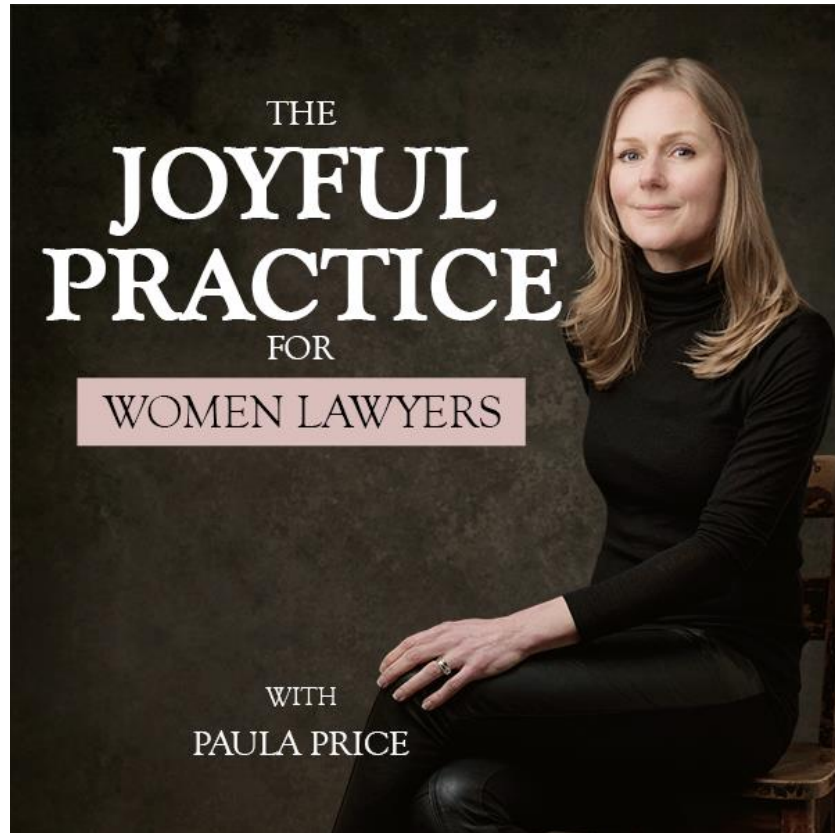


## Ep #16: The Truth About Balancing Kids and Work



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Paula Price**

## Ep #16: The Truth About Balancing Kids and Work

You're listening to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast episode number 16.

Welcome to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast. I'm your host Paula Price, lawyer turned certified executive coach. This podcast was created to empower women lawyers just like you to create a life and practice you love. Join me every week for a break from the hustle so we can focus on you, what you truly want, and how you can create it.

If you're over the overwhelm, done with putting out fires, and ready to create a life and practice that brings you more joy, you're in the right place. Ready for today's episode? Let's dive in.

Hello my friends. Welcome back to the podcast. For those of you who are joining for the first time, welcome. My name is Paula Price. I am a lawyer turned certified executive coach, and the host of this podcast. I'm so excited to have all of you here today. This podcast episode is for all of you moms out there. I have been thinking about this podcast for the last few days, thinking about how I'm going to set it up for you. It's largely inspired by the fact that my son has just celebrated his ninth birthday.

For those of you out there with nine year old boys, you might be able to relate to what it's like having a nine year old son. His big birthday wish this year was to have unlimited screen time. So we bought him a number of Fortnite related things, including a new Switch because he lost his earlier this year, and a few associated accessories. So for all of yesterday, he was pretty much attached to his Switch. He was playing online with his friends. All things that basically are a dream come true for a boy of that age.

It was a big moment for my husband and me too. We have a daughter as well. She'll be turning seven in about a month. What was quite interesting for us is just to reflect back on the fact that we have been parents for the last nine years. For those of you out there who are at the beginning stage

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or who are maybe at the same stage of us or further ahead of us in terms of your children and how old they are, you'll know what that feels like to have that distinction in your life as the pre-parent and then as the post-parent.

Also by coincidence my husband and I are about to celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. So we've planned a very short getaway for ourselves, a chance to reconnect because we don't often have a chance to do that because there's so much going on in our house at any given time. So we've had a lot of time, I've had a lot of time to think about the realities of being a parent, being a professional working parent. Having two parents in the house who are both quite active professionally and with our children, and how we manage.

One of the reasons I wanted to talk about this in particular is that parenting, managing roles as a parent and roles in the workplace, it's a topic that comes up quite a bit for me in coaching conversations that I have with my clients. A number of my clients find it really interesting when I share with them some of my experiences in how I have managed or things that I found when I was practicing were helpful for managing the balance between children and working.

I think it's also really helpful to talk about this issue in a way that allows you, allows others to see that there are so many ways that you can approach the situation. There's no right way to do it. There's no wrong way to do it. The purpose of today's episode is to really invite you to start thinking about how you can really manage your parenting life, your work life in a way that feels true to you.

For those of you who are listeners who are not parents, I would invite you to think about this podcast in a context that may be applicable to you. So maybe you're thinking about becoming a parent, and these are some of the issues that you might want to think about ahead of time. Some of the

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strategies that I'll offer today would be helpful in terms of setting you up for when you make that transition, and quite likely also in your practice as it is currently.

Maybe you don't have children, but you have other commitments in your life that are important to you that take up energy and that you want to devote your time to. Maybe it's aging parents. Maybe it's a cause that you're committed to. Maybe it's something else entirely. You may find also that some of the lessons that I'm going to share today, some of the insights, are applicable in that respect as well.

So with that, I'm going to jump into today's topic. It's all about, I call it the truth about balancing work and kids. The truth is that the truth is different for everybody. So I just want you to think about how these situations apply to you, what resonates with you, and some of the strategies that I'm going to share. How you can take those strategies and apply them in your own context. So with that, I'm going to jump in and talk about this idea of balance and how this might be showing up for you.

I think what we can all relate to, especially if you're like me. If you're a professional working mom that there is this almost relentless operation that is unfolding every single day. So there's the kids, and there's all the things that you do with your children. There's getting them ready for school. There's making sure they've got clean clothes, making sure they're fed, making sure they're engaged in activities that are stimulating for them. Helping them with their friendships, helping them navigate their daily struggles.

Maybe there's some health issues that you're needing to deal with, doctors' appointments, getting things sorted out. There's all sorts of things. Not to mention just loving them, right. Just having those moments with them where you're just their mom, and you're sitting on the sofa with them or whatever that looks like for you.

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That looks so different depending on the stage that you're at with your kids. If your kids are very young, then you're probably doing some work around sleep training and daycare and nannies and managing just a very different stage developmentally. Versus where I am now with my kids, which is that they're a bit more grown up. Their problems present in just a different way, right. So that is a huge part of my life, and something that's very important to me.

On the other hand, there's your professional life. For you, that might look like a job at a law firm. It might look like a job at a particular organization. It may be that you have your own practice. For me, I've got my coaching practice. The professional side of my world, of my life, is also really important to me.

There's a number of things that I want to do professionally, and same is true for you. When you're looking at your growth, where it is that you want to see yourself in a few years. What you are contributing in the day to day, the deadlines that you're meeting currently, the coworkers that you have, the relationships that you have with clients, with other lawyers. There are a number of factors that you are balancing on any given day.

There may be a tension—for a lot of us there is—between the commitment that you have towards your children and the commitment that you have towards your professional responsibilities. This doesn't even take into account all of the other things like a personal relationship with your spouse or partner, your friendships, the way that you take care of yourself, any outside interests that you may have, any hobbies. Maybe travel. I mean there's all sorts of other pieces that all come into play.

The focus of today's episode is really about the balance between children and work. I'm not going to talk quite so much about these other pieces. I'm going to talk about it in relation to the area where I have my expertise and

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where I feel like you have a lot of control, which is over the way that you are thinking about the challenges that come up.

I'm not going to talk about the structural challenges that are out there. I think we can all agree that there are a number of structural challenges, cultural challenges that exist in our professional environments, whatever those look like. Those are real areas where people are doing a lot of work, where there's a lot of progress being made. Different rates depends on where you are. I'm not really talking about that today. I'm leaving that aside. What I'm really focused on is on you and on what is within your control to shift and manage when it comes to overcoming the challenges and managing the challenges of balancing your work and your children.

So when it comes to the problem of the balance, I think what we see is that feeling overwhelm that comes as being a parent. It can be the feelings of guilt. Some people call it mom guilt. It's that feeling of maybe being anxious. This can show up in all sorts of different ways when you're trying to have this so-called balance.

I know when I first went back to work after having children, my life looked so different. Pre-kids I was able to take care of myself. I was able to roll into the office at 7:00 a.m. if I wanted to, all ready to go, have a long day of work ahead of me, fully rested, looking professional.

When I had children, things changed quite a bit. I was then responsible for feeding my son, getting him over to daycare, getting over to the office. So I would show up usually at around 9:00, not 7:00, and I would have already had two hours of solid work ahead of me or that I would have already done. Just getting everything organized at home, having lunches at home, doing the drop off, dealing with whatever emotional drama was part of that particular morning. So already there's a big difference there.

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If you're a mom and you're doing the drop off, I'm sure you can relate to trying to pick your clothing based on what isn't going to show all the cheerios that spilled on you that morning. Maybe you change when you get to the office. If you're in it, you'll be able to relate to what that feels like. It may also be that there is a cultural shift.

So for some of you, it may be that you were previously showing up at work in a way where you were able to offer unlimited support. I know that's what it was like for me where I was really able and willing and excited to jump in and do as much as I could. There was no limit on the number of hours that I was prepared to work. I really enjoyed that. Once I had children, there were bookends on my day. I needed to pick up my children—initially one child, then my children. I needed to make sure that I was home for them either picking them up for daycare or meeting the nanny because she needed to go out.

So you may be able to relate to this as well whereas previously your time really was your own time. You didn't have other people depending on you. Now all of a sudden, you've got other people depending on you. So you're not able to necessarily show up in the same way that you were showing up before.

So there may be other challenges that you have. For example, you feel that you don't have enough time. So maybe you're at the office, and you're struggling to get something done. You wish that you had an extra hour in the day to do it to a standard that you are more comfortable with. Then you go home, and you feel like you're not spending enough time with your children. That you missed out something significant in their life. By the time you get to them, they're exhausted. You're exhausted. You're not giving them the best that you have to offer. You feel like you're not giving them the best that you have to offer.

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So there's a lot of different situations where you might feel like you're not parenting the way that you want to be parenting. You're not showing up at work the way you want to be showing up at work. What's happening is you are starting to kind of beat yourself up almost and feel very frustrated that you're not able to perform in either capacity the way that you would like to.

Now the reason that this is a problem. As I mentioned, there are the structural and the cultural elements that create or that contribute to this being a problem, but we're not going to talk about that today. What we're going to talk about more is the internal part, which is the pressure that we put on ourselves. We seem to have decided that there's a right way to do things and that there's a wrong way to do things. We feel pressure to be doing it perfectly all the time. We want to be the perfect moms. We want to be the perfect lawyers. So we're constantly putting pressure on ourselves to do that.

In a sense, the standards that you are setting for yourself. I would invite you to think about what those standards are. How you expect yourself to show up as the perfect parent, as the perfect lawyer. These may be really unreachable standards for a lot of us. I wanted to pause here and just sort of highlight that within the culture, at least as far as I've been exposed.

I think there's a real way of emphasizing what I'll call the sort of so-called heroes of the legal profession. The women lawyers who have returned to work two weeks after giving birth to their children or who are dictating memos while delivering their child in the hospital bed. These are stories that I've been told about women who I've either worked with or I've known others to work with. There's a celebration of this idea of really doing it all and being more than excellent in their professional context while having young children at home or whatever that might look like.



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I don't want to say that this is not something that you may aspire to. I think there's a lot of lawyers, female lawyers, who will be able to and who will choose that path. I think we should celebrate those women.

That being said, I also think there are a number of women lawyers who are going to have a slightly different approach. They're going to have different goals for themselves. They're going to have different goals for how they parent. They may be taking their full year or 18 months or whatever the mat leave policy within their organization. They're going to be taking that time away from the office. There are women who opt out altogether of their legal careers for a certain amount of time after they have children.

So what I'm trying to get at here is I think the culture may really celebrate the achievement in the professional context over the achievement of whatever you might be doing at home. This is not to say that those women who are achieving high standards or great goals within the professional context aren't also achieving with their children. I'm not saying that at all.

I think that when we are looking at ourselves and trying to set goals for ourselves, trying to figure out how to balance everything that we not compare ourselves to all of the people who are out there doing it in a certain way. We're going to talk about this more as I offer strategies for how to manage that balance, how to manage your thinking around that balance.

I really just want to highlight here that there really is no one single way to do it. There is no right. There is no wrong. Unpacking that for yourself is a huge part of feeling more at peace, feeling proud, and feeling like the path that you are choosing for yourself is one that is in alignment with what you want. It doesn't necessarily have to be what everyone else wants. So just wanted to pause and make that point before we move on to the next piece of it.

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So when it comes to balancing, when it comes to managing that dynamic, that work life dynamic, for a lot of you it may mean that you're trying to do more. You're working harder, and you're feeling more tired. Maybe you're starting to feel trapped. You feel like there's never a break from any of this.

That doesn't really work because you're trying to find this perfect balance. You're trying to find this situation where you're getting everything done. What you create for yourself ultimately can lead to an untenable situation where you're leading yourself to a place of burnout and exhaustion and frustration. It makes it hard for you to find joy in the parenting and find joy in the workpiece.

So what I'm hoping is that when we talk about some of the strategies that I'm going to offer to you that you're able to find a way where you're able to move from a position of feeling that overwhelm, from feeling the pressure, from feeling all that guilt to a place where you're feeling more empowered. Where you're more at peace with the decisions that you're making. Where you're able to show up more confidently both at work and as a parent because you can feel like you're acting from a place that is in alignment with your values, and where you're showing up strong in the roles that you've chosen for yourself.

So I'm going to offer you four strategies that you can use when you are faced with these challenging times. If you're listening to this episode for the first time, I would encourage you to relisten to it when you are having challenging times. I know for myself from my experience with parenting and working and trying to find a balance between the two. I mean it's almost like time management in an earlier episode. I think it's episode number two.

For some people, time management is unbalanced, right. Not everybody wants to have a perfectly balanced every week looks the same type of situation. They actually have a situation, and this might speak to you. Where you have a deal coming up. You have a trial coming up, and your

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commitment to your workload is going to be more significant than other periods of your work life where maybe you have a bit more downtime.

I think the same is true for parenting. I have found that there are times where my parental commitment is greater. For example, we're wrapping up the end of summer. I've spent a lot more time having family time this summer than I do during the school year. I do that intentionally. When the school year resumes, I'll re-shift my balance so that I'm more weighted towards my professional work and finding a different balance there.

So, for you, your balance might shift over the course of the year. It will shift over time. So I wanted to have that in mind. I would also encourage you to come back to this podcast episode when you have a really rough patch. You will have those. Maybe you won't. Maybe you're one of the lucky ones who will never have that.

I know from my experience and from the experience that other lawyers have shared with me that you may have times that are more challenging than others. I mean it's almost like a perfect storm where the needs of your children, the needs of your office, maybe even your own personal needs. They all come up at the same time, and you may find yourself in a state of really high conflict.

This happened for a lot of professionals over the course of the pandemic where they were working from home. I know I've had this experience where I've gone upstairs to work on my computer, and that is the moment that my children need me the most. So there's this direct conflict where I'm having to choose one over the other.

So if you find yourself in a position like that, I encourage you to come back and revisit the strategies that I'm going to share with you. Because I think they're ways of re-grounding yourself, realigning yourself so that you can find that balance that you're seeking.

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So the first strategies I'm going to share with you are here. Number one is to focus on what you value. I've alluded to this already. But the very first step if you're feeling torn between your work, between your kids, and you're having a hard time navigating that balance, I would encourage you to sit down and really think about what you value most. What is most important for you? This is going to look different for everybody.

For some of my clients, for some of the lawyers that I've worked with. When they have had children, they have looked at their professional work. They've looked at their children. They've looked at the situation that they are in. So this is really a key that not everybody has the same family situation. So if you have a spouse that is traveling for work, for example. That is my situation. That's the situation of some of the clients that I have worked with.

You may need to have more flexibility to be available for your children. If they're in some sort of a daycare or even if they're not in daycare, but somebody needs to be home to relieve them when the nanny needs to go home. Maybe there's a situation where if the children get sick, you need to have somebody who's available to be home with your child. S

o looking at your family dynamic, first of all, and realizing that it's going to look different for everybody. You may have in-laws or parents that are helping with the childcare. That will be a very different situation from another set of parents who may have family that all lives out of town. So everybody is going to have a different situation and will have a different comfort level when it comes to outside care that will be given to your children. So taking that into account.

It may be the stage of your career where you are right now. So, for example, some lawyers that I have worked with are coming back from a mat leave for example. They are in a situation where they are not necessarily sure about. That they may not want to be there. They may be

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looking at other opportunities that are available to them. They may be exploring different roles either within their organization or outside of their organization. But things are shifting for them generally, and they're not necessarily wanting to stay where they are. They're not seeing the path of growth where they are currently.

There are other lawyers who I have worked with who are very much committed. Who are already, for example, up the partnership chain, and they're really trying to solidify and to grow in that capacity. There are lawyers who are going to choose to have a longer mat leave. The situation will be different depending on whether you're in Canada or in the U.S. or somewhere else. The length of a mat leave varies greatly.

That will also depend on your practice. If you're at a firm where your presence is required for your practice to be sustained, you'll probably be picking a shorter mat leave versus if you're at an organization where there's lots of other lawyers that can pitch in and help, and you can be away from the office longer.

All of the choices that you're making, of course, depend on your practice. They depend on what you value. They depend on your home situation. It's going to be different for all of you. So when it comes to assessing what your values are, I would encourage you to think about what is important to you. Not just today, I mean definitely today, but also looking at it with the broader perspective of what do I need to do today to set myself up for tomorrow and maybe a year from now, maybe five years from now.

So get clear on your values, and write down what those values are. I would encourage you to keep a list of your values somewhere where you can see them. Whether it's a sticky note that you have written down and maybe it's posted on your desk or on a board. Maybe you have it in your wallet. Maybe it's in a drawer somewhere. Maybe journal about your values. I would encourage you to keep coming back to your values because those

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are what's going to center you. That's how you're going to know if you're in alignment.

What you might think about is imagining that you are a sailboat. It might be a little bit of an odd thing to think about. The reason I love a sailboat as an analogy is because of the rudder, right. Sorry, a keel. Not the rudder. The rudder steers the boat. The keel, of course, keeps that boat upright. It keeps it grounded.

What you want to be doing is creating a deep keel for yourself so that when you are in the storm, when you have the challenges coming your way, when you have the external influences. When you go onto LinkedIn and you see that maybe one of your peers from law school has just made partner, and you are years from that if that's something that you want.

Or you see someone who is advancing in a way that you wish that you were, but you're held back a little bit because you have been staying home with your children. Maybe it's that you've prioritized your career, and you see somebody else who's out there who is attending their children's baseball game. You wish that you were spending more time with your children.

Whatever it is, I would encourage you to really think about what your values are. To have them clear so that when those storms come up, when the external comparisons come up, you feel confident and centered in the choices that you're making. You can shift. Your values might shift over time. But I would encourage you to regularly check in with yourself to understand what those are and to use those as your guiding spot and not to be looking to others to set your values for you. So that's step one is to really focus on what you value looking in particular at the situation that you have.

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Now the second strategy that I would encourage you to try is to accept and be realistic in your planning. So the first part of this is to really accept the limitations on your capacity that come along with whatever it is that you choose to prioritize. What I mean by that is let's say you choose that you want to spend more time with your children. That means that you're going to be spending less time at work. It could also be vice versa. You choose to spend more time at work and less time with your children.

So what that means is let's say you're spending more time with your children. As I mentioned just a moment ago, you might find yourself in a situation where you see your peers surpassing you. It might be your peers that work within your organization. It might be somebody who you see on social media. Maybe it's LinkedIn or Facebook or whatever it is. You see that they have been promoted, and it maybe triggers something in you that makes you feel like you're not moving fast enough in your career.

It may be that you're not feeling like you're doing enough as a mom. I had a lovely conversation with a friend of mine recently who is very high ranking in her organization. She's done incredibly well. She was talking about this party that she was attending where there were a bunch of families. She was responsible for buying some hotdogs and hotdog buns. She bought more hotdogs than buns. At some point they ran out of buns, and she was kind of beating herself up thinking, "Here I am not showing up with enough buns."

So it's this tendency of being hard on ourselves when we haven't totally performed in some area. Maybe it's that you don't show up with enough hotdog buns. Maybe it's that you're not able to show up to the reading time at your child's school back when they used to invite parents to those things. With the pandemic, it looks different. Maybe you're not able to host the birthday parties that other parents are hosting. There's a lot of situations where you might feel like you're not showing up as the mom you want to show up as.

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So recognizing that there are going to be situations where you are going to feel like that, and like that's okay, to accept that's just a part of it. And again bring yourself back to the values knowing that you're in alignment. That maybe you're not showing up to the reading or maybe you don't have enough hotdog buns, but that you give the kids that you have the time and the love and the space that you think is important for them where they are going to benefit. That you show up for the things that really matter for you. So that is part of it is just to accept and be realistic in your expectations when you are choosing to focus your energies on one thing or another.

Another aspect of this is planning your career based on the choices that you make. So, for example, it may be that you are going to have a situation where you have a lot of support for child rearing. Maybe you've got family members that are going to help you. Maybe you've got a really amazing nanny who's helping you out, and you've made a decision that you're going to go back relatively early after having a child. You're going to put the pedal to the metal, and you're going full on. You have the drive to do that. You want to do that. You've got the support to do that. You've chosen to do that. That might be the option for you.

For others that might mean that you're going to put a pause on your career. Not necessarily a stop, but you're going to slow down a little bit. There are a number of lawyers who, for example, take a bit of a break. Maybe they take on more of a contract position. Maybe they take on a part time role. Maybe they simply stop trying to accelerate their growth within the organization that they are in. They may choose to leave one organization in favor of another organization. They may do that for a period of time while their children are at a certain stage with a view to then turning things back up when they are out of the weeds, as it were.

For some of you, that really might be in the weeds. I know I felt like that when my children were young. Every day was really challenging. They weren't necessarily sleeping through the night. There was a lot of hands on



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physical labor even with them, the meals, the sleep, everything. So it may be that you want to have a situation where you're having a bit more time, more flexibility.

So with COVID, I think we all saw that there was a possibility of working from home. I think that arrangement can be really useful and more manageable for parents, particularly with young children. So it may be that you decide to do it that way. You may look at your career in terms of the long term plan and say, "Well, what do I need to do in these next few years to set myself up for the kind of growth that I want when my children are older?"

I have seen that among my peers, the lawyers who I have worked with or who I know who have had children who've taken a bit of a pause where maybe there's a period in their professional life where they took a bit of a backseat role. But then who have gone on to become partner or found their own firm, firms where maybe they are sole practitioners growing into multiple practitioners. There's all sorts of models that you will be able to find if you can go out and look for them. So you get to decide for yourself what you want that to look like, what you want your trajectory to look like and how you are going to set yourself up for success at all stages.

It might also be that your career strategizing has an element of lateral moves. I just wanted to raise this because I think this may be particularly relevant to lawyers who find themselves within an organization where all of a sudden, they hit a wall. For those of you who have children who are in an organization where you feel like the opportunities for advancement just aren't there, you may want to think about how lateral moves can help you to advance. Maybe you're not going to make the progress you want where you are right now.

So you might think about well where could I go that would support my growth? Some tell-tell signs of where you might grow are organizations

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where—Some organizations in what I've witnessed are more conducive to promoting female leadership than others. So you might look for an organization where there are a number of strong female leaders, ones with families, if that's something that you think would be helpful for you. If that would be an environment where you would thrive more than you're thriving in your current environment.

My final comment under this section where we're talking about being realistic in your planning, accepting that there are going to be choices, that there are going to be tradeoffs is really to allow things to not be perfect. There is a lot of self-judgement that can come along with this. I have experienced this myself. I know clients have experienced this. They tell me about it. Lawyers that I work with who are kind of mentioning this in conversations.

I just would invite you to really be gentle with yourself. To not judge yourself. Accept that things are going to be rocky in patches and they're going to be great in patches. Whether you choose to make work more of a priority or if you choose to make family more of a priority, there's going to be challenges either way. So to the extent that you cannot expect perfection of yourself and to allow for whatever that might look like. I think it just brings you more peace.

The reality is the judgement isn't going to solve anything. The expectations of perfection aren't going to solve or make your life any better. So just being mindful of when you are trying to have everything perfect or where you do have that self-judgement, to consciously try to let that go.

So third. The third strategy that I'm going to offer to you is one that I don't think that we hear enough about at all. This is to celebrate your growth. So for all of you out there. All of you moms, parents who are out there raising children. I don't want to exclude the non-parents.

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So this goes for anybody who is really challenging themselves who have outside obligations, obligations external to their work where they are trying to balance, trying to manage. There are so many benefits. There's so much growth that comes in this particular challenge. So I want to talk about some of those. Because you can use those when you're having those low moments to bolster yourself up, to start to feel better and to feel proud of the work that you're doing.

So number one. If we're going to start celebrating your growth, one of the biggest things that—Okay, maybe this is speaking from personal experience. One of the biggest areas of growth for me was setting boundaries on my time. Maybe this is you too. Before having children, I mentioned this before, I had no boundaries on my time. I didn't need boundaries on my time because I was happy to go in and do everything that needed to be done, or at least that's what I told myself. That's what I believed to be true. When you have children, when I had children, all of a sudden, I had to start to be more assertive about my boundaries.

So it's been a major source of growth for me. Maybe it's been a major source of growth for you where all of a sudden, you're learning how to set boundaries in your life. Whether it's boundaries on your time, whether it's boundaries on what you will or will not do. All of a sudden you are learning to create and uphold boundaries. So that is one thing you can really celebrate as you are learning to balance kids and work.

It may be that the boundaries go not just in the direction of work but also in the direction of parenting. Maybe it's boundaries that you need to set up with your children. Maybe it's boundaries that you're setting up with people who are supporting you. Maybe you've got a daycare where you've got to negotiate some boundaries with the way that you interact with them. I know I had that experience.

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Maybe it's working with your nanny. I've had that experience too where you're needing to set up boundaries and expectations for somebody who is helping you look after your children. Maybe it's renegotiating boundaries that you have with your significant other, family members. I mean there's all sorts of opportunities here where you're now setting boundaries and learning how to enforce them.

For me that was a big shift. That wasn't something that I needed to work on all that much before because I just wasn't that conscious about them. Now it's something that I'm much more aware of. So that might be an area where you've really grown.

Another area that is a huge source of growth is efficiency. I don't know about any of you. I know for myself it was reasonably efficient, but having children made me so much more efficient. I mean it's a blessing and a curse at the same time. The biggest transition for me when I had children and I imagine for many of you if you've started. You've got children. You're back at work. You've got a nanny. You've got a daycare. All of a sudden, the time that you are spending away from your children is time that you are paying for in some way. There may be a financial cost. It may also be that non-financial cost of time away from your children.

So whereas before it's quite easy to go and meet your friends for a drink after work or to have a lunch that maybe goes a little bit longer than planned, but you can make up for it by staying a little bit later at the office. All of a sudden, those opportunities have a cost to them. So you may find that you're just more efficient. You don't spend as much time on social media if that's something that might attract your attention while you're supposed to be working on something else. So that can be a real benefit is that you're more efficient with your time.

The darker side of, and something that you might bear in mind, is that it can be a little bit isolating. I know when I went back to work in an office

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environment, I was not able to participate in as much of the social piece that I had participated in before. That was actually a real loss from my perspective. I really enjoyed the social interactions that I had with my colleagues that I was not able to really participate in as much when I went back because I had bookends on my day. Because I needed to be more efficient.

So the idea here is that having children, having an outside commitment, it really encourages and fosters efficiency when you are at work. So I would love to highlight that.

Another area that you can highlight is creativity. I truly believe that necessity breeds ingenuity. When you are not balancing your work and balancing your family, you may be coming up with some really creative ways to get things done. So it may be that you're thinking up creative childcare arrangements. When I went back to work, we had multiple different types of arrangements. Some involved family members and nannies and daycare. We played with the variables to create care that worked for all of us.

Maybe it's your exercise routines. So when I was working in the office, I had a physical commute. I turned one leg of my commute into a run. That was great because it allowed me to get regular exercise when I was back at work. It was a nice transition between the office and being at home. So there's lots of ways where you may find that this constraint is inviting creativity into your life.

It may also be that you are creating a different way of doing your work. So it may be that within your organization, you're carving out a new role for yourself. It may be that you are finding a new way to work whether it's contract work or setting up your own office or your own firm. So there's lots of reality that may come through in terms of your professional work.

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The next thing that I wanted to highlight is courage. I know when my children came round, I really had to grow my courage muscles. I was now an advocate for them as well as for myself. So I mentioned earlier that I was more deliberate about setting my own boundaries. I also became more deliberate about advocating for my children. There are multiple examples whether it's in a health situation or in a school situation where I've gone to bat for my kids. There is nothing like that as far as I have experienced in terms of how strongly I feel about them and what I will do to make sure that they're getting their needs met.

So courage is an area where I think there's a lot of room for growth. Where you are now making difficult decisions on behalf of you and for your family. I think also the courage to model behavior that your children will be proud of. So it's taking those courageous steps so that you can then turn to your children and show them that it's possible to do these hard things.

Finally when it comes to highlighting some of the growth, I think just the element of wonder. When you have children, I know when I had my first child in particular. I remember just looking at his little face and thinking, "Wow, this is amazing that my husband and I were able to produce this person." It's amazing because I never would have imagined how I would have created him. I don't know how I would have structured his face or his little fingers or whatever physical features, or even his personality. I never would have been able to design him, but here he is. It's amazing how nature works.

So there's this sense of wonder. It's not just in the way that your children appear as they are. It's that all of a sudden, you're in an environment where you have so little control. The children do what they will do. They have their own personalities. There are things that happen that you never could have predicted.

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Part of our growth as parents is learning how to support them and how to be resilient and how to manage change and manage the unpredictable. So there is so much there that is just magic and that you could never have planned for. There are things that will happen that you never could have predicted, and yet that is part of the journey. So I think just appreciating and experiencing that sense of wonder that happens when you bring little people into the world. That is another area where I think we can all be really proud.

So these are some examples of areas that I know have made a big difference in my life since having children. I would invite you to think about what those might be for you.

Finally, the fourth strategy that I want to offer is to really find and create a supportive community for yourself. So there are many areas where you will want to feel like you're part of something. So my goal for each of you is to find within your community, within your workspace, within your professional colleagues, within your personal attachments, your family, your friends. A place where you feel understood. Where you feel like you don't have to explain yourself, and where people get you. I think that's really important for all of us to have that feeling of belonging somewhere.

So whether it's carving out a space in your existing organization, whether it's finding an organization where you feel that connection. I would encourage you to find a way of surrounding yourself with people who reinforce what is good and positive in your life as opposed to putting yourself in those situations where you feel like the odd person out. I would encourage you to think about creating your own environment.

So I mentioned earlier that there are women who I know, women lawyers, who have gone on to found their own law firms. Others who have joined other organizations and who have then created their own almost like a niche or a culture of moms who are working. You may want to create or

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find something like that for yourself if you find that the environment that you're in right now isn't conducive to you feeling good about your role, professionally and at home.

I would also invite you to think about who you're choosing to spend your time with. So outside of work, who is it in your life that is supporting you? Where are you getting your inspiration from? Who are you connecting with? So that might be seeking out people who are like you. People who you feel good around. Whether that's friends or family. I would also encourage you to think about whether there are relationships that you need to let go of.

Maybe there are certain people who you just no longer connect with or you don't resonate with anymore. Maybe it's time to create a little bit of a distance there. Maybe not permanently, but just enough that you can feel more confident about yourself. If you have a friend, for example, who you always feel badly when you speak to that person, maybe that's a sign that you need to either re-approach your relationship with that person, how you relate to them, or maybe you need a little break.

It could be any number of things. I would really invite you to think about how you are choosing to surround yourself with, and to really focus on surrounding yourself with people who are supporting you.

Finally on this topic I would encourage you to enlist help where you can get it. So whether it's your assistant at the office developing your relationship with that person and finding a way to get the support that you need, whether it's other lawyers in your office, colleagues that can help you. Maybe it's mentors who can help you.

It's also at home. Who can help you at home? Whether it's your nanny, maybe it's the daycare. Maybe it's somebody who comes in to help you clean your house. Maybe it's a family member who's helping out. Maybe it's a spouse. All the different people who can help you. I would encourage you



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to not try to do everything yourself. I know that might be the temptation for many of you, but be kind to yourself and allow others to help you.

Now when you engage these four strategies—and I'll just review them quickly. Number one is to get a focus on your values, what your values are right now in your current context. Number two to accept and be realistic in your planning. Number three is to celebrate your growth. Number four is to find and create a community of support.

When you do these things, it will work for you because it will take the pressure off of you from being perfect, from following somebody else's path. It's allowing yourself to really center yourself on what's important. It will allow you to navigate those storms. We talked about having that deep keel. It will allow you to navigate those storms without being thrown off center. Ideally what happens here is that you will find and create more peace for yourself because you're not second guessing yourself. You're not doubting yourself. You know what's important to you, and you're able to act in alignment with that.

The skills that you need to exercise these strategies is really to have patience with yourself, to realize that you don't have to do it all at once. It's compassion for yourself, being fair to yourself. Not expecting perfection all of the time. Allowing yourself to make mistakes. Allowing for things to be imperfect. Allowing for uncertainty. Knowing that you can't predict everything with your children and that's just how it is and that it's okay. Also having faith that regardless of how things may look right now, everything is working out exactly as it should. You're going to be okay. Your family is going to be okay.

When you do these things, you'll create more peace of mind. You'll know that you're where you should be. You'll allow yourself to wiggle free of some of the guilt that might come, some of the self-doubt that might come

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in terms of balancing. Not feeling like you're doing enough on the work front, enough on the parenting front.

It will hopefully allow you to experience more appreciation of the different stages that you're at. It will allow you to show up in your roles as yourself and show up for what you really stand for. So you can really be for your children, be the role model that you want. You can show up the way that you want with them. You can show up at work the way that you want to show up there.

So this, my friends, is what I have to offer you this week about balancing parenting and working. I hope that some of what I've shared with you has resonated with you. That it has allowed you to feel more connected. That if any of these challenges are challenges that you have that you're not alone in experiencing them. That there are ways to thinking about these things, actions that you can take to help yourself in these situations to feel more balanced and to enjoy the process more.

If this is something that you would be interested in going into more deeply, I would invite you to reach out to me. You can contact me on LinkedIn. You can find me on thejoyfulpractice.com website. You can google me. I would love to hear from you. This is something that I coach my clients on often. I would love the opportunity to connect with you, and to help you find the balance that works for you. So with that, I'm going to sign off. I'm going to wish all of you a wonderful week. I very much look forward to reconnecting with all of you again next week. Bye for now.

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