

The Juggle Struggle

Advice from new partners on how to be good at what you do — and have a life, too

Norma Chavez knows a little something about balancing a career and a personal life. The Los Angeles litigator recently made partner at Ericksen Arbuthnot while raising five children — including two sets of twins.

Her keys to making it work: having a set daily routine at home for her kids (one that covers everything from shower schedules to who's cleaning the litter box), and leaving the office early enough to handle soccer practice, homework and dinner — but returning to her work once the kids have gone to bed.

Her in-laws watch the 3-year-old twins during the day when the older children, a 7-year-old boy and 10-year-old twins, are at school.

Her mind-set, to put it simply, is to decide on what she wants to do, and then figure out a way.

She's twice been successful asking to go part-time, after her first set of twins and her middle child were born. After her second set, she fit her full-time hours into a four-day work week for a time. She's now back to five days a week.

"I can show them the quality of work I can do," she

said. "And there's nothing wrong with asking. If you don't ask, you'll never know."

That mind-set carries over at home, too. She recounts how her husband recently suggested that the soccer schedules of their three oldest kids are getting out of hand, and that perhaps they shouldn't all play. "And I'm like, 'You know, don't give me reasons to stop. Give me solutions.'"

Below, we asked seven other partners to share their thoughts on having a life while climbing the ladder.



JASON DOIY

"I'm an avid runner. While my practice is demanding and unpredictable, and often involves criss-crossing the globe, wherever I am I make time to run. It allows me to achieve physical and mental balance and remain in the right frame of mind to best serve my clients."

— RACHEL BRASS
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher



JASON DOIY

"I've been fortunate to find the two key things needed to achieve the proper life/work balance in the legal profession: a supportive family and a firm that understands the importance of a life outside of work, and makes room for its lawyers to have such a life."

— JENNIFER McCORMICK
Foley & Mansfield



JASON DOIY

"To be good at what you do, and have a life, too ... requires a giving and flexible partnership with my wife. As a busy attorney married to a busy businesswoman, we are constantly leaning on each other for support to ensure that family and our 1-year-old daughter come first, while also providing each other with the breathing room that we need to meet our career objectives."

— EUGENE LITVINOFF
McDermott, Will & Emery



JASON DOIY

"Work-life balance flows from healthy habits. Stay passionate about your work, stay true to your core values and give back to your community. I recharge my batteries by traveling to new places and finding new perspectives. Quality time with family keeps me in touch with what is most important in my life."

— DEAN FEALK
DLA Piper



JASON DOIY

“‘Be anything you want, just be the best,’ my father always said. Now, I understand what he means. My ‘best’ is not measured objectively. I measure it through the balance of my professional achievements and personal fulfillment. If you try to achieve your professional goals at the expense of enjoyment, you might be disappointed. You have to enjoy the journey and not focus solely on the end game. Create boundaries, and find the optimal balance between hard work, good health and time with family, friends and most importantly, you.”

— JOHN CU
Hanson Bridgett



JASON DOIY

“The work life balance is not something that results in a set schedule each day or even each week. It must be adjusted as demands at work and home change. The key is to be flexible.”

— CHRISTINE LONG
Berliner Cohen



JASON DOIY

‘Maintaining a sustainable work/life balance requires a firm culture that’s supportive, but that’s not enough. We all have access to tools and resources that connect us to work 24-7 as a default, so achieving a sustainable work/life balance also requires the discipline and constant focus that come with making it a priority in life.’

— PETER WERNER
Cooley Godward Kronish