Balancing Parenthood and Being a Physician

By Melissa Young, MD [2]

As a physician and a parent, you do the best you can at work, and the best you can at home, and you try to stay sane.

Source: Physicians Practice

Someone once told me that I have to watch Sarah Jessica Parker’s movie "I Don’t Know How She Does It." It’s the story of a working mom who is trying to be a good mom and a successful career woman. This was brought on by me telling her that I wake up at 4 a.m. for no reason, and that as soon as I am awake, my mind starts going. "Did I send in that prescription?" "What is the school lunch tomorrow?" "Mr. Smith is coming tomorrow, so I have to make sure we have his labs." "Did I sign that permission slip?" "I forgot to put the clothes in the dryer."

Being a physician is a hard job. While office hours may be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., we always have more phone calls to make at the end of the day. And there are always phone calls on Friday night in the middle of dinner. And there are always those patients that leave you thinking about them as you lay in bed trying to sleep because you worry that something isn’t quite right.

Being a mom is a hard job, too. There are school lunches to be made. There are school concerts to attend. There are science projects to work on. Pediatrician and dentist appointments have to be made. The children have to be kept healthy and safe and happy. They suddenly remember on Sunday evening that they need an extra binder for school on Monday morning. And, of course, a house needs to be kept clean. Not spotless, I gave up on that years ago, but presentably clean. Groceries must be purchased. Laundry must be done. Lawns must be maintained. And being of that "middle generation," there are parents that need tending to; doctors appointments, prescriptions to be filled, other minor (hopefully) emergencies. I have to admit, I am, in a way, fortunate that I don’t have to deal with that, as my parents live on the other side of the world, but I have colleagues who have to alter their practice schedule because mom needs to be taken to the doctor.

So how do we do it? We just do, I guess. You do the best you can at work, and the best you can at home, and you try to stay sane. Having an outlet like music or art or a sport can help; if you can find the time. Having a supportive spouse or other family members can help, too. You make some concessions here and there.

No, I can’t be a chaperone for the school field trip. I do not have hours on Saturdays. I figure, no matter what I do, I can’t please everyone all the time, so I just try my best and muddle through and do what I can. The practice is profitable. The kids don’t hate me yet. I think I’m doing OK. I haven’t had time to watch the whole movie (surprise), but I can only assume in the end, the main character comes to the same conclusion. It’s what all working moms do.

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