



Q&A

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How have you balanced your personal life with the demands of a career in M&A?

Throughout my career, I've been fortunate enough to work with team members who value a healthy work-life balance. As a junior lawyer, this flexibility enabled me to develop a balanced approach to managing expectations and turn-around times. This supportive environment also allowed me to work flexible or reduced hours later in life, when starting a family. Recognising that the focus on career and family can shift over time, it's important to understand that this journey is not linear. There are periods when career demands take precedence, and other times when family responsibilities become the priority. Embracing this dynamic balance is key to maintaining both professional growth and personal wellbeing.

Additionally, setting boundaries with colleagues and clients is crucial. This became easier as I advanced my career and gained more control of my work environment and schedule. In the post-COVID/work-from-home era, boundary setting became even more important. I consider self-care and family responsibilities as non-negotiable commitments that go into my diary just like any work meeting. During these times, I am not available unless there is true urgency.

Teamwork is essential for everyone to achieve a proper balance between work and play. When a team pools their different skills and supports one another, workloads become more manageable. If we didn't have reliable (and willing!) colleagues who could look after our transactions, taking a well-deserved holiday, focusing on key family moments and managing unexpected personal or professional challenges would become close to impossible.

Have you faced any gender-based challenges or biases in your career? If so, how did you navigate them?

I am fortunate to say that I have not experienced significant bias during my career. However, I have observed and, to some extent, experienced the perception that mothers, particularly those who require career adjusts around family, are seen as "half a lawyer" and not serious about their career.

Just because we spend less time in the office does not mean that we are any less committed to or reliant on our jobs. In reality, working reduced hours does not mean working less, but just working outside of traditional office hours, especially during crunch time on our M&A deals.

What does self-care look like for you, and how do you prevent burnout?

For me, self-care involves maintaining a balanced lifestyle through proper nutrition, sleeping well, and lots of exercise!

Often, when we are under pressure at work, the first things we neglect are those that impact our health and vitality. That is a crucial mistake. You cannot pour from an empty cup. Prioritising self-care ensures that I have the energy and resilience to meet both professional and personal demands.

Have your views on work-life balance changed over time?

Definitely. As a young lawyer without family responsibilities, it was easy to devote a lot of time, and overtime, to my career. However, when I became a mother, I transitioned to flexible hours to spend more time with my child. While this decision impacted my career advancement, my priorities at the time were clear. Now, as my son is getting older, I am entering a new phase where I can shift more focus back to my legal practice. My views on work-life balance have evolved to recognise that it is a dynamic process, requiring adjustments based on different life stages and priorities. This realisation drives home two key points: first, that as life changes, so do your priorities; and second, that your team members are also going through their own shifts at different times. This means that sometimes they support you, and at other times, you support them.

How do you mentor or support other women entering the field?

My office door is always open, especially for our young female lawyers, to approach me with questions or concerns, or for advice. Whether its venting about a tough day, seeking guidance on a challenging legal question or discussing personal matters, I make myself available to listen and provide support. It is crucial to foster an environment of openness and trust, where women can seek guidance without hesitation; in particular, from those who have navigated the highs and lows of this challenging field.

Maintaining work-life balance is another critical area where I offer support. I share practical advice on how to manage the demanding nature of our work while maintaining personal wellbeing. I emphasise that it's possible to have a successful career without sacrificing personal happiness and health. Of course, as a more senior member of the team, I must not only "talk the talk", but also "walk the walk". This means being reasonable when allocating work and setting deadlines, and stepping up on transactions when a team member needs to take some time off.

I also believe in openly and honestly discussing the impacts of high-pressure careers on fertility, which has caused terrible heart ache for so many women. Those of us who have experienced this should share our experiences and encourage younger women to make informed decisions that align with their personal and professional goals. 🙌

