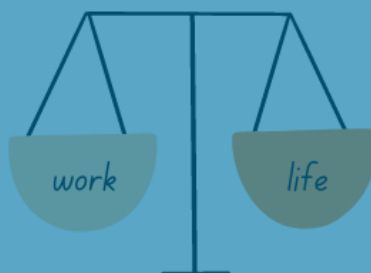


ACHIEVING WORK/LIFE BALANCE

PAC Pearls



From Dr. Shawna Flanagan

I think achieving career balance is a lifetime juggle! I have been out of dermatology residency for more than 25 years now. At times throughout my career, I have donated a lot more of my time to my children and husband and felt guilty about my career. At other times I have done the opposite and felt guilty about my family. As the late great Barbara Walters was once quoted, “Most of us have trouble juggling. The woman who says she does not is someone I admire but have never met.”

From Dr. Mona Sadeghpour

As women we are constantly judged for the type of physician, mother, spouse, or leader that we are. We are judged if we work too much or too “little”. These narratives often impart guilt on our conscience and unnecessary stress that we don't always address openly. The truth is that no one creates our life or productivity narratives, but us.

Studies have shown that even when women and men dermatologists work similar hours and are “equally productive,” women are still subject to lower salaries and higher attrition rates from the workplace as their male counterparts due, in part, to a sense of isolation or alienation from the workplace.

Knowing this, after having my first child, I needed to create a work schedule that worked for me personally and encouraged me to stay in the workplace without getting burned out. I decreased my work days to three (from five) days per week and have focused on making my schedule “smarter” and more efficient. I continue to remain active in our national societies and contribute as much as my work-mom schedule allows.

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Two years later, and pregnant with my second, I have maintained my schedule at three days and have thus far prevented burn-out and chronic fatigue. One day, when I feel ready I may go back to the "regular" four day work week; but I may not. Flexibility and confidence in knowing that I need to stay true to myself and what works for my family has been one of the keys to "achieving balance" for me.

The more open we are to possibilities and discussing them with our colleagues without shame or judgment, the sooner we can rid ourselves of the narratives that keep us back or even worse force us out of the workforce due to burnout.

The **Women's Dermatologic Society (WDS) Practice Advisory Committee** supports Dermatologists at any stage of their career looking to manage or start their own practice by offering resources on navigating the practice environment. Visit the **WDS blog** for more tips and advice.