

You Have a Life Outside Pharmacy?!

I would like to make a confession ... I have a life outside pharmacy. More specifically, I have a child. Yep, that's right, I have a living, breathing, crying, laughing, energy-filled human being that I get to come home to every night. It has been 3 years, and I have yet to come up with a good answer to the question "How do you do it all?" I immediately get defensive and start thinking of a million excuses, but the reality is, we all have life outside work. My after-work passion just happens to spill (or sometimes pour) full glasses of milk on the floor and draw pretty pictures on the wall with crayons. Most residents work long hours and dedicate their year (or two) to excelling their career forward. With all of our hard work, I don't think any of us should feel guilty about having something outside pharmacy that we love.

Lean In to Your Career AND Personal Life

As residents, many of us believe that, by an unwritten rule, the answer is always "Yes," but to do our best work, we need to consider which tasks will contribute the most to our growth. As I was preparing for residency, many current and past residents gave the advice "Learn to say no in residency." Although they had the best of intentions, I think that advice isn't always practical and often comes with a negative connotation. To put a positive spin on the same concept, I have learned to say yes to everything ... everything that I love, that is. When my calendar is filled with the activities that I'm most passionate about, I find my work moves faster and is better quality. With this mindset, I can lean in to my career and give it all I've got, but because everyone can see my dedication, there is never a question when I need to step away to be with my family. I love being a pharmacist, but my family is what gives me life and passion. Spending the time to cultivate my relationships is just as important as any deadline I might have on the horizon.

Make the Time

No matter what you do, there are only 24 hours in a day, but we can choose how we will spend those hours. Personally, I use Stephen Covey's Four Quadrants to prioritize my to-do list. Every day, I spend some time working in quadrant II, which consists of those tasks that are important but that may not be urgent. Dedicating time to tasks well before they are due helps reduce the number of urgent assignments that must get done and gives extra time for feedback to improve quality. Having fewer urgent deadlines on my list eliminates my stress and allows me to be more in the moment when I'm spending personal time as well. To make my personal life a priority, I put personal events that I just can't (or don't want to) miss on my calendar to block the time. For example, on Saturdays, my son and I almost always go to the park to play, so I never plan work during that time. To me, spending an hour playing in the sandbox is just as important as making sure my in-service is perfect.

Welcome Support with Open Arms

Sometimes it feels like I'm doing it all, but really, I have a team that has helped me every step of the way. First, I have my husband, who has sacrificed his career, moved halfway across the country, and been completely committed to making my dreams come true. Second, my family and friends are extremely supportive, and when I start to feel overwhelmed or have a looming deadline, I can trust that they will be there to lend a hand. At work, I do the same by using the strengths of those around me. As a PGY1, I didn't plan a moment of any of the conferences I attended. My coresident was excellent at travel plans, so she took on that responsibility, and our trips were always flawless. Had I tried to do it all, who knows where we would have ended up!

I have yet to have anyone respond without a face of pure shock when I tell them I am a mother. Sometimes I can barely believe it myself. Perhaps there are other residents out there with personal lives.

Whether your passion is running, reading, or starting a family, are you creating space for your personal life? If not, consider the possibility!

About the author: Anne Misher is a full-time pharmacist and mommy who enjoys playing dinosaurs and watching Mickey Mouse Clubhouse. She is now taking applications for free maid services in the Chicagoland area willing to scrub Popsicle stains out of carpet and Cheetos stains off couches.