



Michelle Manning



Kari Apel



Donna Beestman

Photos by Amy Lynn Schreck

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The great balancing act: Family and career

By Lesa Knollenberg

“I want it all, Daddy!”
Veruca Salt, *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*

Thanks to a certain governor of Alaska, discussions on the issue of having a demanding career and a grounded family have been widespread. When the women I know have a minute to spare, they tell me that balancing home and work is thorny. Can we have it all? Can we be all things to all people, and still be enjoyable to be around? How do other people balance the sweet nest of a family life with the challenges of a career?

Michelle Manning, an attorney with **Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek’s** intellectual property group in Madison, has two young children. She has this to say: “The secret to balancing a career and family is getting help from extended family. My children’s grandparents and aunts help with daycare, which is a huge benefit. My job requires me to work late on a moment’s notice. Luckily, our family is very flexible.” Manning also credits a workplace that is family-friendly. Even if relatives live too far away to help, many working mothers have created “villages” with neighbors or friends who are willing to pitch in.

Kari Apel, who owns **Apel Associates, Inc.**, Certified Public Accountants and Business Consultants, is in the throes of the work/family balancing act with a busy practice, a seven-year-old daughter and three-year-old twins. She navigates her world with a pragmatic outlook.

“Know when to say ‘Uncle!’ If you need help, you must ask for it. Most people are amazingly glad to help you; you will return the favor to him/her someday. Also, read your body and mind to know when both need a break. A lot of people, especially working moms, feel as if they don’t have time to take a break — but you must take a break, and guilt-free, too! And I don’t mean take a break to run errands; I

mean a mind and body break. Schedule a Friday afternoon off to just go home and soak in the tub or schedule a massage. This really will give you added energy and boost your mind power. We expect our kids to have a time-out when they get out of sorts; we should heed that advice for ourselves!"

Donna Beestman is a career strategist and executive coach who founded **Career Success Strategies, LLC**. She has two grown children, proving it is possible to have a fulfilling family life and a successful, satisfying professional life. "We need to be intentional about our choices at different stages of our lives," Beestman says. She shares these thoughts and tips:

- Achieving balance is an ongoing process with an ebb and flow. At different ages and stages, our kids' needs vary.
- Be "in the moment" at work and with family. At work, be committed to your job; at home, focus on being the best partner and mom you can be.
- Take charge. Set priorities and develop realistic lists. Then enjoy the satisfaction of crossing things off your list.
- In addition to family activities, take time with your partner to keep that primary relationship strong. Even when our kids were small and we both had demanding jobs, we found time to go out or have "date nights" at home.
- Explore ways to get help. You have options, but you need to take the time to find them. Share the household load with your partner and kids. Perhaps get help with house-cleaning or exchange babysitting with friends.
- Explore work options. Prepare and

then negotiate a change with your current employer (flextime, different responsibilities, working partly from home, part-time status). Or conduct a job search to find a more compatible employer. Most people have more options than they think they have.

- Experience gratitude. Life isn't perfect, but step back, slow down and enjoy the people and things around you.

So yes, Veruca, we can have it all. Enjoy it while you're at it.



Lesa Knollenberg is a local freelance writer who is also attempting to balance family and career, but sometimes doesn't finish her

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