

# Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Meet Molly Abele, CPA, Partner at Axley & Rode, LLP, Lufkin, Texas

Achieving a balance between family responsibilities and a career can be a struggle for many working parents, especially mothers. In this issue of *Today's CPA* magazine, we highlight Molly Abele, CPA, partner at Axley & Rode, LLP, and discuss how she balances work with family responsibilities.



## What do you consider a healthy balance between work and family life?

A healthy balance is the state of equilibrium where I prioritize the demands of a career and the demands of my personal life. It does not necessarily mean that work and family are in equal balance, and what works for one person may not for another. The goal is to achieve the career I want with the ability to pursue the personal interests that I love.

## What do you find most challenging as a working parent?

I am, by nature, a control freak. Thus, having the quintessential "mom guilt" for having to decide what I can do and what I can let go of. Learning to prioritize commitments to spend time wisely to achieve my goals is one of the most continually challenging items.

## How do you manage family responsibilities?

I manage family responsibilities in a similar manner to work: prioritization. In addition to prioritizing, I have a support system that I trust to help. Your support system could consist of your partner, family members, friends or neighbors. Remember, it is OK to ask for help from others, especially in your busy season.

## How do you unplug from work?

I do not have work email notifications set up on my phone, which allows me to leave work and enjoy my family time. I try to remember that accounting "emergencies" are few and far between. Company emergencies

would typically warrant a text or phone call that I can respond to immediately. I can check my email at the computer after hours in an emergency or at a designated time that I set aside. I allow myself time away from email.

## What steps do you take to help reduce stress?

I try to follow these three rules for reducing stress:

- Build "me time" into my schedule - You can't take care of others or do your job well unless you are healthy, physically and mentally. You could get a pedicure, a massage, wander around Target, read a book, walk your dog, or take a run. Remember to make time for yourself.
- Adjust standards and expectations – The dishes are not always put up and the laundry is not always folded – and learn to accept it!
- Prioritize, prioritize, prioritize – This should be done for both at work and home. Determining what HAS to be done each day is the first step.

## What habits help you be more productive?

Making to-do lists and documenting everything is important. Make sure to prioritize your lists, as well. I use the calendar app on my phone for notifications, a wall calendar, sticky notes, and a whiteboard to track projects and things I need to do. I record things in multiple places so that I don't forget to do something

important. Minimizing distractions is also essential. Turn off your email for an hour, shut your door, turn on music, choose what works for you.

## What do you recommend for preventing burnout at work and home?

Some tips include:

- Look for ways to reduce feeling overwhelmed;
- Talk to a peer about how you are feeling;
- Look for ways to manage your time more efficiently;
- Analyze your to-do list and cut out tasks that have little to no value;
- Don't over-commit;
- Learn to say no or delegate tasks to others;
- Ask for help from your manager; and
- See if you can adjust your workload or schedule to help relieve some of the stress you are feeling.

Flexibility in meeting your work and family obligations can help reduce burnout.

## How do you support your team members to achieve a balance?

I let my team know that they can talk to me whenever needed and believe in open communication. I am aware of what family commitments each of my employees has and assist in planning work to assist them in achieving their balance. I also encourage time off to prevent burnout.