



Healthy work-life balance for parents

Having a baby need not upset a couple's work-life balance if they reorder their priorities

By Alex Lim

JUGGLING work and life commitments is already a major issue for most couples, and many believe having a baby will only add to their headache.

But experts say you can balance both if you learn to redefine your life goals.

"Work-life balance is a very real issue and when you are currently experiencing tremendous strain, parenthood seems remotely possible," says work-life consultant, Mrs Helen Lim-Yang, a senior partner at OTi-SDC Consulting.

But she advises couples to jointly reprioritise and plan their life goals around their resources, strengths and passion.

"If your intent is to carve out a career niche or to remain in the same industry, then consider a change in role where your expertise is still valuable."

This was what Ms Lee Ching Wern, 30, a corporate communications manager in Changi Airport Group (CAG), did when she and her husband became parents one and half years ago.

She knew it would be near impossible to juggle motherhood with the long and irregular hours she kept in her previous jobs as a journalist and public relations consultant.

In her current role, she can have family-friendly working hours while keeping her career in the communications industry — something that Ms Lee describes as having "the best of both worlds".

This is because CAG encourages parenthood and provides a conducive working environment for its employees with babies or young children.

Its Flexi-Place Scheme allows Ms Lee to work from home for up to two days a month,

Maybe Baby? Journey to Parenthood

At the Maybe Baby 2010 seminar at the NTUC Auditorium on May 8, experts will discuss topics such as achieving work-life harmony and understanding finances, fertility and sexual intimacy issues. For more information about Maybe Baby 2010 seminar, please call 6319-1735 during office hours.

if necessary, as long as her work commitments do not require her to be physically in the office.

"I believe that being a parent does not necessarily mean your career has to suffer. It's a matter of finding a suitable job that allows you to be a good worker without having to compromise on being a good parent," says Ms Lee.

She adds that strong support from her husband Loh Woon Liang, 30, a civil servant, and family help too.

"Throughout my maternity leave and even after I went back to work, Woon Liang has shown his love and support by really doing more than his fair share around the house, including unglamorous baby-related tasks like changing diapers, washing and sterilising milk bottles, preparing baby puree and washing baby clothes with food stains every single day," explains Ms Lee.

While they are away at work, Mr Loh's

parents take care of their toddler Kayla.

"We are very thankful for my parents, both retired, who take such good care of Kayla in the day when we are at work, so we don't have to worry about her well-being at all," says Mr Loh.

"Every evening, when we arrive to bring her home for the night, she will always be bright and cheerful after a happy day at her grandparents'. I strongly believe that such closeness children share with their grandparents from such a young age is a priceless bond that will follow them for life."

The couple, who have known each other since secondary school, understand that parenthood is a major commitment. When they got married three years ago, they knew they wanted to have children and are planning to have one more.

"One of our considerations was to try to have them sooner, rather than later, not just because of the possible complications that come along with pregnancy after age 35, but also because we didn't want to have to worry about our ability to provide for our young kids when we are already in our 50s," says Mr Loh.

Ms Lee adds: "No doubt, there are sacrifices that you'll have to make in terms of lifestyle, but the returns are so much more. The joy of loving unconditionally and being loved the same way by your child is truly indescribable."

Do the right thing

- ✓ Striking a good work-life balance requires a reprioritisation of your life goals as a couple.
- ✓ Consider the kind of life you want to live and focus your energy on your priorities.
- ✓ Know your strengths and passions, and align your life around them.
- ✓ Identify areas of your life that are causing unnecessary strain or wasting too much of your time and make adjustments to minimise the stress or save time.
- ✓ If you are in your preferred profession but work inordinately long hours, find out why. Is it due to the nature of the job, the organisation culture or time-wasting habits?
- ✓ Appreciate that you need not live your life at the same high intensity all the time; there are times when a break is necessary and rewarding.

— Mrs Helen Lim-Yang, senior partner, OTi-SDC Consulting

This is the first of a four-part Maybe Baby 2010 parenthood series brought to you by



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