Cardiology + Family = The Juggling Act of Balance?

Esther S.H. Kim, MD, MPH, FACC
Associate Professor of Medicine
Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute
Disclosures

None
Disclaimers

• I am not a motivational speaker
• I don’t do research on work-life balance but I did do a facebook poll for this talk
• I don’t claim to have any expertise in work-life balance and I’m pretty sure I got asked because I know people on the programming committee and I’m a sucker but
• I have struggled to achieve work-home balance which is the one reason I could be considered to be an expert – be ready for a deeply personal testimonial
• The lessons I have to share I learned by trial and ERROR
• I will share some best practices I have learned from others (including my facebook research)
From pregnancy to raising children to caring for aging parents – do the spinning plates ever stop?

No
My story as told through Facebook...

Vanderbilt University Medical Center
Associate Professor of Medicine · October 2016 to present
Cardiovascular Disease

Cleveland Clinic
Vascular Medicine Fellow · 2008 to 2009

Cleveland Clinic
Staff · January 2008 to August 5, 2016
Cardiovascular Medicine

Cleveland Clinic
Cardiology Fellowship · July 2005 to June 2008

Johns Hopkins Medicine
Osler Internal Medicine Resident · 2002 to 2005

Esther Soo Hyun Kim
June 22, 2008

is glad she never has to cover the interventional service ever again...
Positive pregnancy test 1/1/2009

Hyperemesis gravidarum 2/6/2009

Bedrest 18 weeks to 32 weeks

Jack born 8/22/2009

On an SVM program committee call 8/23/2009

Submitted meeting abstract 8/24/2009

Writing manuscripts on maternity leave
Jan 2011 – dad diagnosed with stage IV NSCLC

Feb 2011 – parents move in with me

Sept 2011 – dad passes away in my hospital
Positive pregnancy test 4/1/2012

Hyperemesis gravidarum 5/14/2012

Bedrest weeks 18-32

Back to work for 2 weeks, then rear-ended by a limo

Back to bedrest
Nursed 15 months, then 13 months during the first 4 years as attending
December 2013 – feel a mass in mom’s abdomen over Christmas

January 2014 – mom diagnosed with NHL and starts chemotherapy

February 2014 – takes mom on trip to NY recognizing that life is more than work

2014, take mom on many trips, some during meetings
I spent 14 hours at work today taking care of other people but saw Cupcake for 20 minutes and missed Jack altogether. I hope one day my boys will be proud of their Mama and not resent her because of her job. There is no such thing as work-life balance but I trust that He has put me where I am for a purpose. Yes, Lord, even in this I submit to your good and perfect plan for me. I will continue to do my best but ask for your grace to help me through.
Treated 6 heart attacks, sent 2 others to cath, 2 to open heart surgery, managed 4 acute heart failure patients then came home to this... my hardest case of the day.

Daniel had a bad poop at nap, it is all over his clothes & his bedding.
Working, working, working.

I only got pajamas for Christmas in 2015

Felt like a small cog in a big wheel

Underappreciated, underpaid, did I miss my true calling?
The Struggle is Real
My “Research” on This Topic

**Esther Soo Hyun Kim** is with Ranya Sweis and 49 others.
April 2 at 8:36 PM · 🗓️

Doctor Mamas, please help me. I have to give a talk to a group of women cardiologists on work-life balance. What is one thing that you do to maintain work-life balance? Or what does work-life balance mean to you? Please help a sister out!
Leave work at work and set some boundaries

*Ashley Scibienki* I eat dinner with my family nightly and put my kids to bed almost every night. I have date nights twice per month with my husband and I try and finish all paperwork at office before I am home (which means I sacrifice and write brief to the point notes) so I have quality time with kids after work. I try and take my kids to school one day per week.

*John Nguyen* From a dad cards perspective- leave your work in the hospital. Hustle hard to finish what you can by 5-6pm everyday. Somethings are just gonna have to wait until the next day. When you’re at home - you put on your mommy/daddy hat.

*Geoff Barnes* Lots of great suggestions and experiences here! I would just add/highlight the importance of saying no and protecting your time. I try to limit the number of 7am and 6pm meetings or evening phone/conference calls so that I can spend time with my family. I’m not always successful, but it’s a goal I’m constantly working on to prioritize family time. I and I agree strongly with outsourcing... cleaning, lawn care, nanny, etc. I try to find ways to make my life more efficient so I can enjoy family time without ring too stressed.
Leave work at work and set some boundaries

Cynthia Gries When I was in med school my mentor gave me the following advice: 1) get season tickets to something; anything, so you make time for yourself and your family. 2) hire someone to clean your house!!

How I maintain work life balance is following that advice AND setting strict boundaries. I get in at 8:30 after I dropped the kids off at the bus. I leave at 5pm (minus the weeks on call) to do their extracurriculars and homework. I will NOT have a meeting at 5pm-schedule with me during normal work hours. I get my work done and I am pretty good at it so I never ever feel guilty about setting those boundaries.

Anna Hemnes I like what Kerry Brandt Dunbarsaid. Balance is over years, not days. I travel a lot for work, so if I'm gone on the weekends, I give myself permission to leave early during the weekdays. I try to be fully present when I'm not actually working, e.g ignore phone and email if possible. Even when you're PI of the lab/clinical research enterprise, acknowledge all the great people who you work with who can carry on when you"re at home. Just as you would do the same for them. Balance is measured in years, not days.
It’s not just work or not work, it’s all “life”

Charlie Wiener First thing is to abolish the term ‘work-life balance’. It creates an artificial dichotomy that suggests work is not part of life. As Kerry and Anna say it is about ‘life balance’, which includes work and so much else. People should stop suggesting they are oppositional.

Susan Koon Whitelaw Ok so I’m not a physician but manage a rather large group of vascular techs. I have the ability to just about do anything from home. The most important thing for me is to adjust my hours as needed. If I need to leave early I just send whatever I am working on to a cloud or an email so that later that night I can finish it. This allows me to be there for the Hockey games or band concerts and still have time to meet work deadlines 😊

Marysia Tweet Esther Soo Hyun Kim, thanks for inviting ideas as they are interesting to read through. Some of my thoughts: I see it as integration of career-life and not necessarily balance; I try to prioritize meaningful family events (e.g., use vacation days on kids bdays so that we can do something special even if right after school); try to build a network of trusted mentors and colleagues to support each other during ups and downs; seek opportunities that are fulfilling within and outside of work; it’s ok to say no depending on priorities and other obligations; build a village esp if you have children; stay connected with spouse if you have one; don’t be afraid to pursue your dreams. Sending you best wishes for your talk- wish I could hear it!
It’s not just work or not work, it’s all “life”

Erin Donnelly Michos First. I don’t call it "balance". It is work-life integration. No one day is ever "balanced". Work is part of life. Sometimes work issues are more immediately demanding, and sometimes its family. The pendulum swings back & forth and is hardly centered. It can be very hard to keep up with it all but never lose sight of the things that bring you joy and personal satisfaction, both at work and at home. Having a meaningful hobby outside of work and home helps too. For me, that hobby is running.

Ranya Sweis Sometimes the balance means that today I’m focused on work because it needs it and tomorrow I’m more focused on home because that’s where the need is. Like a swinging pendulum. And I also second paying for what doesn’t give you joy (and I’ve been saying that before Mary Kondo was a thing). For this stage of life it means paying for cleaning, cooking, childcare and laundry. That way when I’m home on the weekends, it’s 100% family time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segmenters</th>
<th>Integrators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Set clear boundaries between work and home</td>
<td>• Blend work and life</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rarely bring work home</td>
<td>• In-home office, invite coworkers over to the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work and non-work are separate spaces –</td>
<td>• Extreme integrators: stay constantly connected, feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distracting/inappropriate to cross</td>
<td>more committed to work with onsite childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boundaries</td>
<td>• Integrators may pay a bill or schedule a lawn appt if they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extreme segmenters: no pictures of family at</td>
<td>have 5 minutes before going in to a meeting at work</td>
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<tr>
<td>work, kids don’t go to company daycare</td>
<td></td>
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Nippert-Eng, 1996
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Segmenters</th>
<th>Integrators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Experience less conflict between work and home</td>
<td>• Experience less negativity when work creeps into their home life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to give enough time and energy to both and feel successful</td>
<td>• Work experiences more likely to positively influence home experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “switching off” may help lower stress and exhaustion</td>
<td>• Positive emotions from home help achieve work-related goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Segmenters report higher levels of well-being than integrators</td>
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“Leave work at work and set some boundaries”                               

It’s not just work or not work, it’s all “life”
• Segmenters working with integrators can feel forced into integrator behaviors (ex: answer email from home)
• How stressed or satisfied a person is at work is influenced by whether the workplace supports preferences for integration or segmentation
  → fit with the organization matters
• Integrators need boundaries too. The modern world of work reinforces tendency to “blur the lines”
  → Disconnect from work

Susan Matulevicius: Making sure your work culture values this balance too. Engaging leadership to see why emergency childcare, flexible work schedules, maternity and paternity leave, etc are important. Finding a village of people to help with your kids and with you, and 100% agree with outsourcing daily tasks (cleaning, laundry, lawn maintenance) so time at home is time concentrated on kids. We try to make weekends and weeknights not about work but sometimes hard. Also schedule in exercise!
Setting Boundaries

• Clearly communicate your preferences for boundaries between work and home to family and coworkers.

• Actively manage your time
  • Segmenters: stick to a strict work schedule or only check emails during work hours
  • Integrators: set aside time for some distance from work to prevent exhaustion

• Use technology according to your preference
  • Separate vs blended work/home emails
  • Turn off notifications on phone at home
Organizational Culture

Integrators
• Does the organization support flexibility
• If you are an integrator, are there ways for you to work from home (infrastructure to remote in)

Segmenters
• How do others at your workplace manage work-home boundaries
• What are the expectations and culture of “shutting off” after hours
The culture of my organization no longer fit with my preferences... so I found a new organization
Get Some Help Cause You Can’t Do It All

Kerry Brandt Dunbar: It’s ok to pay people to do things for you. Clean your house, mow the lawn, get someone to make meals for you. It’s important to make sure YOU are eating and sleeping and having some peaceful time, and not just caring for everyone else and not yourself. Unplug and don’t work when you’re home if you can. Find time to exercise. It helps sooo much with stress management.

Anna Hemnes: Also, totally agree. Somethings can, and should, be outsourced. Save money where you can and splurge on people who save you time:

Num Chompunut: 1. Set priority. Know your capacity. Don’t afraid to say NO. Then spend your time accordingly. Be clear what’s your priority: work? How much work you can take on? Kid? Relationship with hubby? This apply to both husband and wife. Both should be on the same page.
Yes you can have everything but may not be at the same time because the end of the day, you only 24 hours a day. You may need to say no some things at work that maybe your priority when you were single. Or expect kid to be less perfect, house to be less tidy etc. Let some of the things go.
2. Outsource at much as possible.
4. Don’t forget to take care of yourselves. Always make time things that you are passionate about. Even like an hour or two a week. Don’t lose yourselves in demands if others.
Practice Self Care

Stephanie Kamila Schedule self care. As much as possible give each kid one on one attention. It’s all a work in progress
Give Yourself a Little Grace

Kerry Brandt Dunbar  Be kind to yourself! No mommy guilt. Some weeks there’s no balance and there’s gonna be way too much work. It happens and you just deal and move on. The next week will be better.

Ashley Scibienksi  I do think work-life balance exists but it is impossible to be a perfect physician, wife and mom so I just do my best and am ok with imperfection at times 😊❤️

Anne Mackow  Careful decisions about what you say yes to at work, and strategic decisions about what meetings you actually have to be there for. Don’t be afraid to ask for help doing certain tasks if someone is willing to help, so you can focus on spending time as you need to with your family—echo the thought that you can’t be perfect at everything (bring a physician, wife and mother), and can’t do everything. Choose as wisely as you can, forgive yourself your mistakes and be honest with yourself and your spouse about what you can and can’t handle. And me time takes many shapes and forms...

Cathy Stein  I don’t know if my perspective as a PhD is just totally different, but wow you ladies have very different ideas than me! 1) Awesome husbands are essential. My husband is supportive, understanding, and picks up when I fall. 2) Give yourself grace. You can’t be perfect and awesome all the time. 3) Have reasonable expectations. A famous geneticist once said you can’t be an awesome wife, mom, and professional all at the same time. One of those things will drop. So don’t expect that you can’t keep all 3 balls in the air with 100% intensity and perfection. I will never have the career of someone that doesn’t have kids. That’s okay. I’d rather have a few less publications, tiny bit less funding, and a few less invited seminars but have awesome kids.
Get Over It!

The message that I try to give women is to recognize that on their way, they became accustomed to performing at an “A” level in everything they do, that’s how they got to be doctors. Once you have a family, all of a sudden you are aiming for a B average. Everyone still expects you to pull A’s in all subjects because no one sees your course load but you. It is a vital transformation to learn to believe in yourself and be proud of yourself in the absence of the external reinforcement that helped support you on your way. You can’t have the largest clinic volume and you can’t be the mom who brings all the holiday cupcakes to school, get over it!

Lynne Stevenson, MD
Aimee Kirsch Zaas I agree with Erin Donnelly Michos. There is an awesome JAMA op ed piece by Catherine Humikowski last year about this -- she says "I can think of no I can think of no other dichotomy so damaging to a young physician...than to imagine that life only begins once work has ended." My goal is to find the best way to develop longevity - both in work by figuring out what sustains me at work and how to be the most engaged outside of work. Its never perfect to say the least but thinking through the long view and not the day to day or week to week has been really transformative.
How I get through... no! How I thrive...

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<tr>
<th>The Philosophical</th>
<th>The Practical</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I know who I am – whether at home or at work – and I feel secure in that</td>
<td>• I get my house cleaned, my kids to go aftercare</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I have found work that I find fulfilling and with which I feel like I can help make a difference.</td>
<td>• I do not work on Sundays</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I can look outside/beyond myself - my faith keeps me grounded and humbled (vs humble – still working on that) and never without hope</td>
<td>• I ask my kids which activities are important to them and make sure I am there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• My organization understands my need to segment and because of that, I will often happily “integrate”</td>
<td>• I Facetime my kids incessantly when I travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I have many, many mentors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I cultivate relationships in all my spheres – others rejoice with me when I fly and pick me up when I fall. I do the same for them</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
I'm hoping Jack forgot one comma...

Mama
Pretty Hardworking
She's kind to me.
Doctor
Jack

Dear Mama, I hope you
enjoy words. I just
wanted you to know
that we all love
you and that you
dare the most
awesomest job.

P.S. I hope you win the
lottery or something to
delighted with your job.
I don't mean that
in a bad way.
-Jack

Jack, age 5

Jack, age 9
New hobby?
I married the best man in the world.

I've been studying for my cardiology board recertification exam for the past couple months on top of work, travel, mothering, and all the rest of the craziness. Took them today (and don't need to do it again for 10 years... if I passed) and am relieved. The boys welcomed me home with roses, balloons, and drawings of rainbows and unicorns. For these couple months, Charles Paik has done all the dishes, made coffee every morning, made all the kids lunches (and mine too), and sent me to the test today with breakfast and snacks in hand. He has also been hiding laundry from me for a month so I wouldn't get stressed out. He really loves me, and I am a truly blessed wife. Yes, I am glad to be at the end of a grueling couple months, but what I am really celebrating is the love that has gotten me through.

People sometimes ask me how I do the things I do. This is how. These boys love me so much that they sleep on the floor next to my desk while I work. I gotta work hard to make these boys proud of their Wiley/Mama. They sacrifice too. Photo taken at 1:30 am by the light of my desk lamp.

To Momma with love;

I have new respect for single mothers. Chars has the flu = Esther takes out trash, does dishes, picks up dog poo, takes care of Jack... Second thought: I have new respect for Chars...
My family still think I’m the bees knees so maybe we are ok...

Esther's Post

We are the Paiks of Brentwood, formerly the Paiks of Cleveland, Ohio, our home for 11 years and hometown for our boys, Jack and Daniel. A quick rundown:

- Charles: Grand patriarch (aka, head chauffeur) who spends his days sitting in front of a computer supporting oncology EMRs for Sarah Cannon.

- Esther: Beloved supermama who somehow feeds, clothes, cleans, and cares for the three Paik boys while also doubling as a cardiologist at Vanderbilt. And did we mention she used to be a Duke cheerleader?

- Jack: Curator of fine Lego figures, zen Pokémon guru, and 3rd-grader at Christ Pres. He also enjoys taking care and tormenting little brothers.

- Daniel: Fierce yet kind 5-year old who loves all things fast and thrilling (ie, rollercoasters) and strives daily to make a happy plate for lunch. Oh, and his true name is "Cuppy".
Our Families are a Gift

Facebook Post:

Esther Soo Hyun Kim is with Charles Paik.

April 5, 2017 • 🗓

You know that night when you have a deadline but your youngest needs someone to read to him and then your oldest needs help with homework and then suddenly it's 10:30 at night and all you've done is watch Try Guy videos and felt guilty about not working? I swear it's only by grace and miracles I've made it this far... but better a life with Jack and Cuppy than all the accolades and money this world could give. I have made the wiser choice by far... minus the Try Guy videos - but come on, they're so funny!
Our Work Is A Gift -

Esther Soo Hyun Kim
May 15, 2015 · Cleveland, OH · 🙋

It's Friday night, sitting here working, yet another deadline due, so tired I'm crying. Then a funny thought hit me - 20 years ago, I would have given my whole world to be exactly where I am right now. Except for letting me keep my dear Appa a little longer, my Heavenly Father has answered every cry of my heart. He is so good, and now my tears are out of gratitude. "Have to climb the rocks to see the mountain view." Keep on climbing, my friends!
Final Thoughts

“Lastly, coming to the realization that work–life balance does not mean an equal balance will make life more realistic and rewarding. We should not have to place our different roles at odds with each other competing for time. Instead of desiring work/life balance perhaps one should seek inner happiness. This instead should be our measure of success.” Mayte Figueroa. Work-Life Balance Does Not Mean an Equal Balance. Front Pediatr. 2016 Mar 14;4:18

What you do is important and impacts lives – both at work and at home. What a privilege

Naomi Hamburg I really don’t like the term work-life balance because it implies if you were a perfect woman you could magically do away with the wonderful chaos that comes from being a mom and a doctor
Thank You