



WORK LIFE BALANCE

By Jasmine Daya

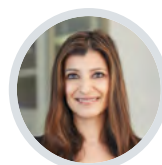
During law school, I kept hearing about the concept of "work life balance". It seemed that law firms wanted to sell us on the fact that their firm absolutely enabled you to achieve work life balance and my peers seemed enticed by this selling point. I on the other hand could not have cared less about work life balance at that point, I just desperately wanted to secure a solid articling job because I recognized that without one, I would never get called to the Bar!

As I moved up the ranks from articling student, to associate, to named partner, to managing partner and now to owner of my law firm, the concept of "work life balance" was never at the forefront of my mind. How could it be? Between my career, my family which includes three children and a bit of a personal life, there has not been time to reflect on the concept except when asked. Within the last year, I have been fortunate enough to have achieved goals outside of law which include publishing my first chicklit novel, *Law Girl's Bump in the Road* written under my pen name Leia London and I have launched my food and lifestyle blog, *JD in the Kitchen* (www.jdinthekitchen.com) with my first Indian cookbook *Appetizers and Chutneys* being released shortly. This whirlwind of activity also known as my life has resulted in many people asking me two questions: (1) Do you sleep? My answer: Yes! Every night and very well; and (2) How do you do it all and achieve work life balance? It's the second question that makes me circle back to over a decade ago when I was in law school and first heard these buzz words.

Years ago, when I heard the concept, I pictured a set of scales with one side being work and the other side being life or rather, everything outside of work. As you are likely aware, that is not the case. You are not spending 5 hours at the office to enable you to spend 5 hours on the golf course. There is no equal part work, equal part life. As I reflect on my life, the best advice I can provide is to do everything you love and the chips will fall into place. Do not fear failure because it will occur and it will make you stronger but instead, fear regret because that will haunt you for the rest of your life.

A couple of years ago, I was extremely stressed out at the firm due to tight timelines on various proceedings all requiring my attention. I unloaded on a good friend of mine and told him that I wished I could just cook! I told him how much I loved cooking, that it was such an outlet for me and how much I derived pleasure in seeing other people enjoy my food. I am quite certain he was only half listening to me but nonetheless he simply looked up from his phone, stared at me and said, "So why don't you?" In that moment, I was so annoyed to say the least. What did he mean, why don't I? He clearly hadn't listened to everything I was working on. My life was and continues to be so ridiculously busy, just hearing about my days exhausts anyone that cares to listen. About a week later, still stressed out and enduring neck and shoulder pain due to too many hours at my desk and on my computer, I sighed and said to myself, "Why don't I?" What was stopping me? I love practicing law but the truth is that nobody said that you have to be a lawyer and have nothing else in your life. My cookbook series and food and lifestyle blog are all thanks to my passion and some guy that said, "So why don't you?"

I don't believe that there is an equal balance between work and life but I do believe that I am a much better lawyer with a positive attitude and increased efficiency when I pursue my passions outside of the office. The time I spend with my family and friends socializing, hanging out with my kids, laughing with my girlfriends about nothing and everything, checking out new restaurants, taking weekend getaways, reading for pleasure, trading stocks, monitoring the real estate market, listening to new music, hitting a pilates class, watching the Raptors, writing for my books and blog, recipe testing and doing everything else that I love to do is what gives me balance. You are your only limit!



JASMINE DAYA
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