

Articling After Pregnancy

A law girl's bump in the road: Articling after pregnancy

By **Jasmine Daya**



Jasmine Daya

(June 17, 2019, 12:29 PM EDT) -- Clutching my precious newborn son two days after giving birth, I listened to a message on my answering machine at home. It was Sept. 16, 2005. The message was from Jack Fireman, a legend in personal injury law in Toronto. My articling interview was lined up for the second week of October.

I had put feelers out during my last trimester that I was looking for an articling position. Jack Fireman had just opened his firm. Fireman Lawyers didn't advertise that they wanted or needed an articling student. My query was the result of grassroots networking; I knew one of the associates at the firm.

Back to scrounging for suitable office wear. A girlfriend came over armed with suits that might fit me. I picked one. The day of the interview, the suit was too big for me. I rummaged through the house for two safety pins, so at least the skirt would not fall off me. Guys have "belt and suspenders;" women's clothing does not offer those options.

Even worse, I had "new mommy brain:" my world consisted of nursing a newborn, changing diapers and no REM sleep. My son was a horrible sleeper; he woke up every hour. I operated in a fog, on auto-pilot.

What did all this mean? I didn't have time to research the firm I had an articling interview with and I knew nothing about Jack Fireman or his firm. I felt terribly guilty about that. Actually, the articling interview was my first social event of any description after giving birth.

I was breastfeeding. Every new working mother will tell you that she lives in fear of leaky breast milk staining clothes, causing personal embarrassment and looking unprofessional. I was afraid that during the articling interview my breasts would leak, preventing me from concentrating and making a good impression. I found this frustrating because I cared about the articling position. And I wanted the job so badly! I volunteered during my articles; for me, getting the experience of articling for 10 months was much more important than getting paid.

I don't remember much of the interview with Fireman. I kept zoning out because I was so sleep deprived. There was a lot to be said for smiling, nodding politely, and letting Fireman do all the talking. He did not dumb down anything; he expected me to keep up. He went off on tangents about personal injury legislation and I had no idea what he was talking about. I didn't know anything about personal injury law.

I do remember, however, that Jack adapted the famous line from late president John F. Kennedy: "Don't ask what I can do for you, Jasmine, but rather what you can do for me." That line stuck with me.

With the sleep deprivation, foggy brain and lack of knowledge about personal injury law, I was shocked when I discovered I got the job. I began articling on Oct. 31, 2005. One of the other lawyers I was introduced to at the firm, Bill Wolff, said, "On Hallowe'en, I'll be dressed as a lawyer."

To get ready for my first day of work, I bought a breast pump and figured I could make it to lunch before expressing breast milk. No one told me that Jack Fireman liked to have a sit-down, three-course lunch and that he left the office at 11:45 a.m. every day. I hurried to the ladies' room, where

I tried to express milk without anyone knowing what I was up to. Minutes later, Fireman's assistant was knocking on the bathroom stall, informing me that the boss was waiting. For me. On my first day of work.

We went to lunch and by 2 p.m., I was dying because I hadn't expressed any milk. Add this to my list of afflictions: rock hard, milk-gorged, painful breasts. That night, I crawled into a warm bath. I felt that nursing and articling didn't mix. By early November, I had given up breastfeeding.

Fireman would leave instructions for research he needed on my office voicemail in the evenings. He would come to the office at 9:30 a.m. to review the work he had assigned to me.

While I was articling, I went to Brampton court on Tuesdays for trial scheduling, which was always at least a two-hour affair where I would wait until my matter was called and socialize with other articling students and associates.

One Thursday, I was supposed to go to the Newmarket court. I was carrying my infant son while waiting for the nanny to arrive when the inevitable happened: he spit up on the shoulder of my suit. I had a limited number of suits at that point, given that I had just started working and was short on time to go shopping.

I put on the same suit I wore earlier in the week, on Tuesday. Surely nobody would notice as it was a different court and likely different lawyers would be there, I thought. I went to court. A junior associate from another firm saw me and said, "Jasmine, isn't that the same grey suit you wore on Tuesday?" It's been more than 13 years and that lawyer, who has become a good friend since then, still calls me the "One Suit Wonder." Some things stick with you forever.

By December 2005, Fireman offered to hire me back after articling. Years later, I took over his firm when he retired.

I love doing personal injury law. The people who come through my front door are hurt — physically, emotionally and financially. Some have burned through their savings and are about to be evicted because they cannot work and cannot pay rent. I can help them get compensation and some semblance of normalcy. They need help. I get them help. It's a great feeling.

This is part three of a three-part series. Read part one here; read part two here.

Jasmine Daya is managing lawyer at Jasmine Daya & Co., a personal injury firm that specializes in club assaults, cyberbullying, claims involving minors and negligent landlord issues. She can be reached at jasmine@jdlawyers.ca.

Photo credit / [biscotto87](#) ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

Interested in writing for us? To learn more about how you can add your voice to The Lawyer's Daily, contact Analysis Editor Yvette Trancoso-Barrett at Yvette.Trancoso-barrett@lexisnexis.ca or call 905-415-5811.