



# CAREERS & PARENTING CAN THRIVE

FINDING YOUR VERSION OF BALANCE

WHILE JUGGLING CAREER & BABY



**WRK/360**

A close-up photograph of a woman and a young girl. The woman is in the foreground, smiling broadly with her eyes closed and her tongue sticking out. The girl is behind her, also smiling and looking towards the camera. They are both wearing colorful, patterned clothing. The image is split diagonally by a white line, with the text on the right side.

OUR MISSION

We support  
working parents  
through their  
big life events.

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**WRK/360**





## MAMA, WE GOT YOU!

Parenting is tough. But being a working parent adds another layer of complexity, especially for new mothers. Annabel Crabb, the author of *The Wife Drought*, wrote, “The obligation for working mothers is a very precise one: the feeling that one ought to work as if one did not have children while raising one’s children as if one did not have a job.”

Mothers still spend much more time on childcare and housework than fathers. That [“invisible labor”](#) — all the unpaid hours that make up a mother’s life — adds up. The “maternal wall” is a very real thing. [More than 4 in 10 working mothers](#) say that they’ve reduced their working hours in order to care for a child — which, inevitably, affects their ability to rise within an organization and continues to keep women underrepresented in leadership roles.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of 2018, [over 60% of households are dual-income where both parents work full-time](#), yet it’s women’s careers that continue to suffer. When both parents work full-time, domestic duties and child-rearing disproportionately fall squarely on a working mother’s shoulders. This parenting penalty starts right from birth when traditional gender stereotypes take hold, and one parent is initially tasked with caretaking. In the case of heterosexual couples, it is almost always the woman, especially if she is recovering from childbirth and/or breastfeeding. Thanks to this divide, [women have actually reported feeling less stressed at work](#) than they do at home — while men, who traditionally haven’t taken on as many household or childcare responsibilities, feel less stressed at home.

Working with hundreds of new parents who have transitioned to becoming working parents, we have found that new moms and new dads are often not having critical conversations to understand each other's views about how they are going to manage two careers, caretaking, and household responsibilities in a way that works for their family and aligns with both partner's career and personal goals.

And while we are advocates for employer support and family-friendly work policies, we recognize that if couples are not more equal at home, the ability for women to rise to leadership roles and advance in their careers is greatly diminished — as is the ability for men to be fully active parents.

## KEY QUESTION GROUPS

From our work with new moms and dads, we have found there are 5 areas expecting / new parents should explore when they are considering how their family is going to manage the juggle of work and parenting:

1. Your own parent's work experience while they were young.
2. Your expectations of what it means to be a good parent.
3. Your current relationship and how you manage responsibilities.
4. You and your partner's career goals.
5. You and your partner's goals to integrate work and baby.

The following is a guide for conversations to have with your partner as you navigate careers and family. This guide works best if you break up the conversations! And remember, there are no wrong or right answers. Every baby is different, every parent is different, every family is different and every work situation is different. The point is to spark conversation so that you and your partner are aligned on what you BOTH want professionally and personally.

## Question Group #1: Your own parent's work experience while they were young.

Not surprisingly, how you were raised may have a significant impact on how you envision parenting, whether you see yourself making similar decisions as your own parents or moving in a completely different direction. Oftentimes we hear from new parents that they didn't expect the pressure they would feel to give their own children a similar experience — that may be in direct conflict with your previous views on raising children and maintaining your career. It's important to ask yourself how that experience has shaped you, but also to understand the perspective of your partner and how they were raised!

1. Did both of your own parents work? How did that impact your relationship with your parents?
2. Did your parents take on traditional gender roles? Think through examples and how you interacted differently with your parents.
3. Do your parents expect you to continue to work once you become a parent? Why do you think they have this expectation? Do you agree or disagree?
4. Do your parents expect your partner to continue to work as a parent? Why do you think they have this expectation? Why do you agree/disagree?

## Question Group #2: Your expectations of what it means to be a good parent.

There is no single way to parent, and being a good parent may mean something very different to you than your partner - especially when it comes to how you envision each other's role. Take some time to learn about each other's expectations so you can both align with what is more realistic in day-to-day life!

1. Write down what you believe makes a good parent.
2. Is there a difference between how you envision your partner's role? If so, how?
3. Write down three to five reasons as to why you hold these beliefs of a "good" parent.
4. How realistic do you think it is to achieve your version of being a good parent?
5. How realistic is it that your partner will achieve your version of a good parent?
6. Do you think it's important for one parent to be the primary caregiver and one to be the primary breadwinner?

## Question Group #3: Your current relationship and how you manage responsibilities.

Take a moment to take a look at how you currently handle the housework load and any care responsibilities in your home.

1. How do you currently divvy up responsibilities at home?
2. How do you want to divvy up the responsibilities of caretaking and home care? (Ideal scenario)
3. What do you believe is your partner's vision of ideal parenthood? How do you think they expect you to show up as a parent?
4. When it comes to traditional gender roles (male = breadwinner; female = caretaker), how do you anticipate that playing out in your new roles as parents?
5. How much time do you/did you currently spend as your own personal time (time without your partner, pre-baby)?
6. What are the important personal things you want to keep doing once baby arrives or that you need to reclaim not that baby is here?



## Question Group #4: You and your partner's career goals.

With more and more couples coming from similar backgrounds, especially as women have increased access to education, it's important to discuss your career goals and expectations vs. just making assumptions based on income and/or traditional gender roles. Families too often assess one person's salary against the cost of childcare and do not consider that beyond lost wages, it also includes lost investment from any retirement assets and benefits, as well as lost wage growth, that you could expect if you stayed in the workforce. But while the financial implications are big, the money is only one piece of the puzzle:

1. How do you currently support each other's career goals?
2. What are your top 3 career goals for the next 3 years? What will need to happen in order for you to achieve those goals?
3. Have you prioritized one person's career over the other's? Do you expect to keep prioritizing that same career?
4. Do you expect or want to "take turns" prioritizing each other's careers?
5. What support will you need at work in order to meet your current career goals as a new parent? Does anything need to be adjusted?
6. Do you personally feel the need to be the breadwinner? Why / Why Not



## Question Group #5: You and your partner's goals to integrate work and baby.

Now it's time to get into the nitty-gritty. It's all about diving deeply into the logistics and considering various situations that arise when juggling career and parenting. Use this list as a starting point to ensure that you are communicating, especially when it comes to making decisions on childcare.

1. Who will care for the baby while parents are at work? What days? How long?
2. Have you determined your ideal childcare situation (day care center, in home, family or friend, etc.)
3. When baby is sick, who will take the day off to stay home with the baby? If you have in-home care (e.g. a nanny), what happens if that person needs the day off or is sick?
4. When the baby has appointments, who will be responsible for taking baby?
5. Do you ever need to work late, attend evening networking events or anything that might require additional caregiving?
6. How will you manage work travel? Do you both travel? Will you both need to travel at the same time?
7. Who will be responsible for getting baby up and ready in the morning? Evening routine? How will you divide responsibilities?
8. How will you divide household responsibilities / outsource them?





## IN SUMMARY

This is by no means an exhaustive list of everything you should be discussing with your partner when it comes to juggling career and family. But hopefully, it helps new parents realize expectations of new parenthood and reality are often misaligned.

Thinking through your own experience, understanding your own personal and professional goals as a working parent, and discussing those with your partner will allow you both to be clearer in your own expectations and more likely to realistically plan for this major life transition!





Want More?  
Let's Work  
Together!

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