Time Management and Family Issues

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1. TIME MANAGEMENT AND FAMILY ISSUES

This chapter collects the advice of a number of women who have participated in CRA-W panels on time management and balancing a career with a family. Perhaps more than in other panels, the discussions were illustrated with personal anecdotes. Some of the flavor of those conversations has been preserved in this text with direct quotes from panelists and participants (indicated by indenting).

It is clear from their comments that women at all stages of their careers—from novice faculty members to eminently successful senior women—struggle with the substantial demands that compete for their time.

> When I showed up for my first faculty job, my orientation was "Here's your key. Here's your secretary." That was it. I really didn't know what I was doing and I spent a lot of time trying to figure out things like, Who do you talk to if something is wrong with your computer? And how come when you ask them to do something, they don't do it right away? It took quite a bit of time.

> In my first two years, course preparation took a lot of time because I had a new course every single semester. Also I was writing grants. (I was not successful in the very beginning and I have a drawer of rejected grants to show it. And then one year everything worked and now I have too many.) I finished publishing papers out of my thesis. I started some new research. I did my own programming because I didn't have any graduate students to work with. In the first year, I gave two talks at conferences and one workshop talk. I spent time looking for people I could collaborate with, students and faculty in the department as well as faculty at other institutions.

> I am in my fourth year, and my time is a little different. I have a fairly large research group. I have funding from a lot of different agencies. I'm on program committees but I don't do more than two a year because they're very time consuming. I typically go to about three conferences but now my graduate students are giving the talks, which actually requires more work on my part trying to get them ready. I still try to go around and give talks, particularly since I'm up for tenure and I want to hit up people for letters. I'm on two editorial boards. These came in years three and four and it's unusual to be on them so young but my field is nice to young faculty and tries to bring them onto program committees and editorial boards.

> Getting tenure is hard, and certainly there is no pressure quite analogous to it in the sense that if you screw up you'll lose your job. But the need to manage your time continues after tenure because your responsibilities increase. There are some things that

have to get done and someone has to do them, but in good conscience most of us have to say they shouldn't done by assistant professors. That means tenured professors should carry more of the service load.

> As a tenured associate professor, I teach two classes and only one per semester. Now I have the luxury of having them be mostly repeats except for, of course, my research course, which is quite dynamic and changes. My committee work includes the graduate committee and I am chair of the faculty search committee.

> I'm a full professor and the demands on my time are quite different than when I was an assistant professor. Now I supervise six Ph.D. students, manage grants/contracts from ARPA, NSF, Motorola, AT&T, and Kodak, and I am director of the E.E. graduate program. I teach only one course per year. I'm on the editorial board of two journals, and the program committees for two conferences and two workshops. I chair three committees: one at the university level and two for the IEEE Signal Processing Society. I am a member of the IEEE Signal Processing Society Advisory Committee and an IEEE CS Distinguished Visitor (Lecturer).

Thus, it's not simply a matter of hanging on until you're tenured. Time management is a skill you'll need to cultivate throughout your career. Being a faculty member is time consuming at any stage in your career.

> Panelist 1: Last semester I spent on average about 70-75 hours a week working, away from my two young kids. I ended up with a daughter who wouldn't talk to me any more. I talked to my chair about this and he gave me the impression that this is normal and that I should expect to have to put in this many hours if I want to get tenure. I want to know whether this is normal.

> Panelist 2: I really only work 40 to 45 hours a week most weeks. There are probably about four weeks a year that are outliers where I work 60 or even more because there's an important deadline. But I usually only work two or three nights a week. I have time to do things like volunteer at my son's school teaching phonics for one morning a couple of hours a week. And I go swimming once a week and I try to walk to work for exercise.

> Panelist 3: I think I put in, in an average week, probably 60. There are weeks where I put in more than that and there are weeks when I'm completely burned out and I put in a lot less. You could put an infinite amount of time into this job; there's always more to do. For me personally though, if I had to choose between this job and the rest of my life, I'd choose the rest of my life.

> Panelist 4: I think at this point I work about 50 hours a week, most weeks. There are times when something really has to go out

and I will work a fair amount more than that by getting up earlier in the morning so my family is not aware of it. I'll get up as early as 4:00am when I'm working on something that really has to be done. When I was an assistant professor, I think it was more typical that I worked between 55-60 hours a week. If I look honestly at what I did then and what I do now, I get more done now in 50 hours than I used to get done in 60.

This chapter presents a compendium of strategies for time management. No single approach worked for all women and most seemed to employ a variety of strategies that changed over time as they adapted to new and different demands. There was enormous individual variation.

2. TIME MANAGEMENT: STRATEGIES AND TIPS

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the rush of day-to-day demands and lose sight of your really important objectives. When asked to report what she did on a random day, one panelist came up with the schedule below. This is clearly a busy person but how much of her day was spent on really important matters? How much of her professional activity furthered her career in any significant way? It's not enough to be busy and work hard.

The interesting thing about this day is that while not every day includes exactly the same activities, a lot of my days generally look like this. I worked pretty hard, continuously from 7:00 in the morning until 11:00 at night and yet there's nothing professionally useful that I've done this day except teach. The rest of the work related things were necessary but they don't add up to anything. None of them advanced my career in any real way.

7:00-8:00am	Finish midterm exam (My husband takes care of the kids in the morning so that I can home early.)
8:00-9:00am	Finish lecture
9:00-9:30am	Answer e-mail (I didn't get through it all.)
9:30-11:00am	Class
11:00-12:30pm	Office hours; Write letter of recommendation
12:00-12:30pm	Meet with grad student
1:30-2:00pm	Work on NSF review; Make travel arrangements
2:00-3:30pm	Class (This class was a teaching overload that I volunteered for!)
3:30-5:00pm	Faculty meeting
5:00-5:30pm	Get younger son's Valentines printed off at Kinkos
5:45-7:15pm	Attend older son's basketball game
7:30-8:00pm	Dinner
8:00-9:30pm	Kid's homework; Drive to sport practices; Address Valentines; Kid's bedtime
10:00-11:00pm	Work on letter of recommendation and student evaluations

To avoid having such busy but ultimately unproductive days, you'll have to make deliberate and careful choices about where to spend your time and energy. There are only three basic options:you can do fewer things, you can do them faster, or you can enjoy them more. The remainder of this chapter includes a list of strategies. It's divided into general tips and tips for making it work with children.

2.1 General Tips

The panelists gave 13 general strategies, to help them effectively balance their personal and professional lives.

2.1.1 Know Your Long-term and Short-term Goals

To be able to make choices, you'll need to have clear long-term and short-term goals. Spend some time at the beginning of each quarter evaluating and revising these goals. What do you want to accomplish this year? This quarter? This week? Successful time management involves making decisions based on an understanding of your goals.

2.1.2 Prioritize

Most time management books stress the importance of prioritizing. Make a to-do list and classify everything on it. In light of your goals and other commitments, consciously decide whether each item is "must do," "should do," and simply not that important.

I keep my highest priority list on the whiteboard in my office so that I see it constantly. Each item has a deadline next to it. Everything that makes it onto my board gets done and almost always on time but many things never make it that far. Those things I keep on a separate list and they don't always get done.

To-do lists are depressing. Often I work an entire day, only to end up with more things on my list than when I started. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, I sometimes go for "completions," going all the way down to something relatively unimportant, just to find something that I can finish. It gives me a sense of progress.

I get a lot more done now than I did as a new professor and I do it simply by selecting what I'm doing. There are some basic decisions. For example, it's much better to have one paper of high quality than two papers at second-rate conferences, even though it may be appealing to have two papers. It's better to put in the one and a half times as much work and have the one good paper than to put in twice as much work and have the two average papers. And there really are a lot of explicit decisions that have to do with trading off time verses quality and which things you are going to do and which things you are not going to do.

2.1.3 Learn to Say "No"

This is by far the most important single thing that you can do. You'll be asked to do many worth-while things by students, colleagues, and friends. You can't possibly do them all. Know your limitations. You'll have to say "no" and you'll have to say it often. The key is selectivity. Evaluate each request in terms of your goals. Is this task going to have an appreciable impact on achieving my goals? Is it worth doing? Do I have the time to do it well? Am I going to enjoy doing it? If you can't answer "yes" to these questions, you probably shouldn't be doing it.

It's often really hard to say "no," but practice. Learn to say it nicely: "I'm sorry, I'm trying to limit new commitments so that I can really focus on research this quarter." Or "I can't review another paper right now but I know of some other potential reviewers." Or "Thanks for asking me but I'm already on a program committee this year and can't do two." Or "That sounds like a really interesting post-tenure project."

This is the end of my fourth year, and I've had to teach six different classes so far. I finally told my chair "No, I can't teach another new course because it requires too much additional prep time. I have to spend time on my research." I told him I'd be happy to teach additional new courses after I had tenure.

Avoid saying "yes" when you mean "no."

I find it hard to say no to something far in the future. If you ask me to do something this week or next week, I'll probably say "no." But ask me to do something in six months, I'll say "yes," every time. It always seems like I should be able to fit one more thing in a six-month period. If you're tempted to say "yes" to something, don't answer right away. Ask for some time to think it over and evaluate it off-line.

Beware of volunteering. Over-commitment comes not only from things you're told to do or asked to do but also from things you volunteer to do. Resist the urge to volunteer for tasks that are not high priority for you, even if that means there are long, awkward silences while everyone sits around waiting for someone else to step forward, and even if it means something worthwhile doesn't get done.

Finally, make sure that anything you do decide to do, you do really well. It's much better to do a few things well than to be so over committed that you do a sloppy job.

2.1.4 Make a Schedule

Successful people are often good at scheduling. Most of the panelists described carefully thought out daily, weekly, and even quarterly schedules. This means they periodically spend time scheduling. "What do I have to get done today? What do I have to get done this week? What bigger projects am I trying to get done and when am I trying to get them done by?"

A week is an amount of time that is fairly easy for me to focus on. If on Monday morning, I sort through everything that has to get done in that week, at least I know that I'm not going to let something slip that is really critical. "Am I giving a test this week?" for example. It would be good for me to pay attention to that.

First thing every day, I spend 5 or 10 minutes deciding what I'm going to do. I write down a list and then I just march through it in order. Once I have the list, I don't waste any more time deciding what to do next. When I've finished something, I move on to the next thing. I make sure that the list is marginally doable in a day so at the end, I feel like I've accomplished something.

My schedules are particularly important because of my childcare arrangements: I don't have the luxury of saying "I've got a lot of work to do to do this week, so I'll just work 14 hours a day instead of 9." My time is really constrained.

It often takes a fair amount of time to find schedules that are personally comfortable and function well.

I hate having fully scheduled days, so I try to trade off. Each quarter I pick one or two days a week that I don't schedule at all. It gives me time to focus big blocks of time on projects without interruptions and, if I have to schedule anything out side of work—like a doctor's appointment—I always know when I'll be free.

I schedule all my meetings for Tuesday through Thursday and that leaves me Fridays and Mondays days to do research and to really be left alone.

I work well in crisis mode and so I deliberately schedule crises. If I have a paper that's due, for example, I decide how much time its worth and then I back up from the deadline that amount of time and that's when I start the paper. This creates an enormous amount of tension in my life but it means that I don't end up wasting inordinate amounts of time on last little touches that

might not make much of a difference anyway. This is not an approach that would work for everyone.

I found that my personal style as a student/mother just didn't work when I became a professor. I was always the kind of person to save the best for last, get the worst things over with quickly. If I had an unpleasant task to do, I would start on it right away and get it done. This strategy didn't work as a professor. I've had to become much more demand driven. If I start on routine tasks too early I spend too much time on them. It's better, as was mentioned, to back them up against a deadline. If I have to prepare an exam that shouldn't take more than an afternoon, I wait until the afternoon before. That's a stressful way to work, but I get it done and I don't waste time making it unnecessarily perfect.

I am definitely priority driven. On the other hand, I hate working under pressure. These two things sound like they contradict each other, and in some sense they do. But there are some kinds of pressure that I simply can't live with. I could not make up a test the afternoon before it had to be done because I would be nuts; instead, I just work very hard at deciding how much time I'm going to allow and make sure that it gets done in that amount of time so that other things can fall into place. I work by schedules.

I either want to teach first thing in the morning or I want to teach at lunch. Teaching first thing in the morning forces me to be efficient because I prepare the night before and I don't want to lose sleep. If I teach at lunch time, it stops me from spending too much time at social lunches.

I try to avoid social lunches as well, eating my lunch at my desk or exercising instead but I realize that I may be missing out on some of the networking that happens with my colleagues. As a compromise, I generally go out once week with people from the department.

I always schedule office hours after a lecture because you can't do anything then anyway and the students are going to want to talk to you. So you might as well make that part of your official office hours, particularly if the university has requirements about how many office hours you should have.

I don't see all my graduate students on one day. A lot of people do but I don't because each meeting with a graduate student requires some work out of me. For example, I might have to read a conference paper or a proposal draft. That creates a huge time crunch the day before because I never do things until the last minute. So I need to have my meetings with graduate students spread out over the week.

I never schedule anything after 4:30 in the afternoon because I want to be home.

My children go to bed every night exactly at 8, period. They are in bed, the lights are off. I'm very strict about that. And that's because I often need that hour and a half or two hours to work at night.

If you are married and have children and you and your spouse are both working, you need to have some kind of protocol for who gets extra time to work and when. It's best to work that out in some way that is not tension creating.

Know how long things take.

To make a realistic schedule, you have to have good time estimates. It's hard to do this at the beginning but it's an invaluable skill, developed through experience. As you go through the process of making a test, for example, determine how long it takes. Can you see a way to use less time in the future? Eventually you'll get a good sense of timing and then you'll be able to manage your time better.

Avoid fragmented time.

Don't have 30 minutes between appointments, that's too much time to waste but not enough time to really get into anything. Back appointments up to one another. That will insure that they end on time.

Know when something is good enough.

Don't insist that everything you do is perfect or even that everything is your best effort. If you spend the extra amount of time needed to get that last 10%, you might invest a lot of time without seeing that much of an improvement in quality. Teaching consumes a lot of time. Lecture preparation time can vary dramatically and students can be quite demanding.

> A new lecture takes me from two to 20 hours to develop, depending on the difficulty of the material. If it's an undergraduate course, two to four hours might be enough, but if it's in my research area and I thought to myself, "I really want to know how hidden Markov models work this year so I'm going to put it on the syllabus to force myself to do it" then it could take me 20 hours or more. If it's a course I taught before, it doesn't take me very long because of the preparation that went into the first time. I have slides and behind them I have notes to tell myself what I was thinking about when I was doing that or to explain the little bits of math that I don't think I can recreate on my own. I'm not very good on the fly—I need to really have everything spelled out.

> This year I taught two courses, compiler construction for graduate students and discrete math for undergraduates. The compiler course took over my life. It had been a long time since I'd taught it so I started pretty much from scratch. I spent 6 or 7 hours on every lecture and some times much more. On the other hand, I'd taught the discrete math course many times before and I had extensive notes and lots of worked out examples, so I'd spend about 45 minutes per lecture.

> The first time you teach a course it takes an incredible amount of time. Once you've taught it a few times, the time demand goes down of course. It also depends on the area. Discrete math is the obvious example. I've taught it a few times too and the subject matter never changes, so its much easier the second or third time. On the other hand, programming languages change all the time and no matter how many times I've taught the comparative programming languages course, it always takes an incredible amount of time.

> I don't allow students to drop-in. I always tell them I'm available by appointment through e-mail and I honor that. I always do see them. But I also tell them, do not drop by. I'm very serious about it and nobody drops by without an e-mail appointment. I do really well on the availability question on the course evaluations, so I think you can be pretty strict about your time.

> I've always had trouble getting students to show up during office hours. Now I have very few regularly scheduled office hours and I make sure that I'm accessible to the students for individual appointments.

It's rare that anyone gets ahead of schedule.

> Once, right before I left town, I had my students finish a paper ahead of schedule. When I got back, I noticed a Federal Express bill and asked them why they had Fed Exed it when it was done early. It turned out that they didn't know that you could mail a submission in by regular mail because they had never seen me do it.

If you're late, sometimes, you can get a two or three day extension, particularly for something like a conference paper submission. It's good to check this out in advance, obviously. Also, check whether you have to have it on someone's desk by the deadline or just in the mail. It's important to know which deadlines can slip and which can't. Proposals for programs, for example, typically have rigid deadlines.

Be sure to put your life in your schedule, too.

> My husband and I have lunch together four times a week. It's one of the very few times that we can spend any time together and relax and just enjoy being together. This is almost a religious commitment: we do it because it's really necessary for both of us.

> As a faculty member you do a lot of things but you don't really get much time for professional development. When do you learn new things or catch up on your reading to keep yourself abreast of things? I schedule in professional development time. My husband came up with the idea; he gives himself every other Friday in order to insure that he is doing well and growing as a researcher.

> I need to schedule in time to exercise or I may not get to it.

> Any single day for me has this hour at night where I'm either reading a book or watching TV. I need that; I'll trade sleep for it. It's an important aspect of my quality of life; I need to be able to read novels and watch TV.

2.1.5 Be Organized

Organization pays off. Disorganization wastes time that you probably don't have.

> Organization does make a difference. My personal scheme is that I'm organized at a macro level. If I'm working on eight different projects, there will be eight distinct places in my office where each of those projects is, and I can find them immediately. I don't waste time looking for the relevant pieces of paper. I have the materials for any given project together. Within that stack, I'll organize it as needed. If I'm not working on it right now, I don't take time to put every paper in its place. When I get down to working on that project, I put the papers in their place and then I can work on it efficiently.

> Efficiency is important. I open my mail to the extent that I open the envelope and separate the recyclable part inside from the non-recyclable envelope, but for a lot of mail I don't spend any time looking at it.

The good news is that disorganization is not necessarily genetic. You can consciously decide to become more organized.

> I was the least organized person in the world and I was constantly lamenting the fact that I lost so much time to it. Then about two years ago, I did one of these panels and another panelist said "Last summer, I became organized." This was a total shocker. One could become organized. For me it's still a continuing struggle, but every little bit of organization that I've achieved has made a difference.

One way to become more organized and efficient is to eliminate wasted time. Start looking for your worst time sinks.

> I found that I wasted a lot of time on really ridiculous little things: looking for my car in the afternoon, looking for it at the airport, locating my keys. Now I have a parking algorithm that I can reverse to locate the car quickly. I also have a designated place for my keys in my office. These are trivial things but the time I've saved adds up.

> I try really hard not to chat in the hallway.

> I was so disorganized once I landed at an airport and had no idea where the conference was or what hotel I was staying at. Now I keep a folder for each trip with tickets, hotel reservations, registration forms, and information on how to get there from the airport. I just pick it up as I walk out the door and I'm all set. It saves time.

> I try to make meetings for less time than I think they're really going to take in the hope that it will make me and the other members more efficient. I always make sure there's an end point, particularly if it's a meeting with people that like to go on and on and on.

> I try to make meetings productive by preparing for them. I have an agenda. I have specific questions to ask.

> One thing that floored me when I started this job was how many decisions I had to make every day, big and small. I spent a ridiculous amount of time debating on whether I should do this or not. Should I be on this program committee? Was it going to be fun? Was this other program committee going to ask me to be on that one? Should I wait for that one? I've had to learn to just make a decision quickly and move on.

> I try not to reinvent the wheel at every opportunity. When I teach a course, I borrow materials—lecture notes, syllabi, transparencies, test questions—from friends. The Web is a good source of material and inspiration.

2.1.6 Be Sensitive to Your Most Productive and Unproductive Times

Most people have times of the day when they are more effective and times when they are less effective. These times can change. You should be sensitive to them and schedule the things that need the hardest thinking for your best times.

> There are really productive times of my day where I'm good at working on research and thinking hard, and there are times where I'm totally wasted and there's no reason for me to be trying to do anything. It used to be that my best research was done between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. And now, forget it. I'm asleep or comatose during those times. The time when I work best now is really early in the morning. So I protect that time and reserve it for research.

> When when I first started working, I would carry my backpack full of proposal-related material home every night and I wouldn't get anything done because I don't work well in the evening. There is no way in the world I'm going to write a good proposal starting at 8 or 9 in the evening. I can grade papers in the evening, I can make up homework, I can even prepare classes in the evening. I can't do proposals. It took me several years to figure that out but eventually I started carrying home papers to grade.

2.1.7 Delegate

This is an important strategy. You can delegate things both in your professional life and in your personal life.

Graduate Students

New faculty often overlook their graduate students as a source of support. Part of your job, though, is to train them: they need to learn how to teach, review papers, write proposals, and author papers. You can help them and help yourself by letting them get involved in these activities. Give them lots of responsibility. Your teaching assistants, for example, can help with drafts of homework projects or exams, they can write up solutions to problems, and they can grade. They can have office hours. Graduate students can write sections of grants proposals and papers, they can proofread materials, and they can help review papers.

> I have my students see the TA first for anything I consider boring like coding problems or regrade requests (which I make them do in writing because it discourages them). I want to see them for conceptually interesting problems about the material.

> I have my grad students learn the word processor I use so that if we co-author a paper together, they can get all the format issues resolved and make the camera-ready copy.

> I have something that my students call calendar torture. When we've agreed that they need to do something like write the first chapter of their thesis or finish a conference paper, I pull out my calendar and I say, well, when do you think you could have that done by? And I let them pick a date and they know that once they've picked that date, it has to be done then. Usually, I try to move them back a little—is it really going to take you three weeks to write that? How about two? And they'll usually agree and get it done on time. I also make them have prioritized lists. The more efficient your graduate students are, the better your time goes. It's important to translate your time management skills over to them so that they can be more productive.

Undergraduates

Many departments have graders in addition to teaching assistants. Often these students can keep track of grades, assist in making up solution sheets, etc. Sometimes they can monitor labs and help with office hours. They can be supervised to some extent by a grad student.

> I have always had work study students as office assistants. They are very inexpensive to me—most of their salary is paid by the university—and some of them are really competent. They file, xerox, copy class hand outs, find references in the library, help keep my office organized, etc. Some have even done mailings and designed posters for me.

Secretaries and Staff

Be incredibly nice to these people; if they want to, they can save you repeatedly.

> I didn't have time to proofread my final before I left town this week, so I read it on the plane and called back to one of the secretaries asking her to change the first question and run off a new copy. Once I was supposed to host a faculty candidate but I went out of town the week before, forgetting to make up his schedule of faculty interviews. When I got back on the day he was to arrive, I panicked only to find that one of the secretaries had taken care of it for me.

> I routinely bring the secretaries and our system staff chocolate.

In terms of your personal life, you can delegate many things too. If you have children, it really helps to have a partner who is involved in their care.

> I have three kids and my husband does lots of the childcare. Initially, though, it was hard for me to let him have responsibility: I felt that I, Super Mom, should be the one to take them to the doctor's, get their hair cut, buy their clothes, etc. It turns out that my spouse can do all of these things really well.

2.1.8 Trade Time for Money

This is another form of delegating. Hire someone to do the things you don't like to do. Hire someone to clean the house or take care of your garden or plow the driveway or mow the lawn or paint the bedroom. Value your time. Hire someone to do as many of the little tasks that you don't like as possible. If you love to cook, obviously cook. If you don't love to cook, eat out.

> My favorite rule of time management, which I invented myself, is that up to $20 an hour I buy time above $20 an hour I sell time. There is an immediate corollary to this: I have never in my life taught an overload course and I have never in my life taught a course during the summer. One of the rules of the game is to avoid letting yourself be exploited by teaching part-time in any way.

> I wanted to offer a variation on the trade money for time idea, and that's to reduce your work hours. I did it recently. Just cut down one day a week. It doesn't give me more time with my son, but it gives me more time for other things that intrude on life like doctor's appointments and taking snow tires off the car.

> This also applies to entertaining. My idea of entertaining used to be that took a day and a half and you went shopping and you cooked and cleaned the house, and everything was very elegant. I never had time for it. Now I've learned that I can buy dinner, from pizza to take-out sushi. It turns out people don't mind: they would rather spend some time talking with you than eating home-cooked food.

2.1.9 Stay Focused

Pay attention to what you are doing, don't get distracted. You'll have to do a lot of very different things during a day; learn to context switch fast. Avoid thrashing: you start working on a paper that's due and then think "What am I going to say in class this afternoon?" so you switch to class preparation and then think "I've got a committee meeting in a half hour" and switch to planning that. In the end you don't accomplish anything.

2.1.10 Find a Place to Escape or Hide

Find places where you can go and work undisturbed. Often, that's not your office. Set up a home office or find a cubby hole in the library, but get away.

> The tip I give all of our new faculty is to set up a home office. I work at home for several hours every morning. By the time I get to my office, I've already accomplished a lot and interruptions don't bother me as much. In real crisis mode I intentionally ignore everything [unessential]. I don't answer my e-mail. I look at the subject line, and if it looks critical, I look at it; otherwise, I ignore it.

2.1.11 Be Aware of E-mail

E-mail is a huge time sink. Try turning off notifications and restrict your reading to certain times of the day. Respond immediately if possible and, if not, file it in an appropriate place. Don't keep rereading the same e-mail.

> I have an e-mail file in each directory. Since the directories correspond more-or-less to the different projects that I work on, I can always easily find everything relevant. When I read a message for the first time, I either answer it immediately or route it to the appropriate directory.

> Contrary to the advice already given, I read my e-mail periodically all day long. I particularly like to read it while drinking coffee or having lunch at my desk.

> Every once and a while I get overwhelmed. I had 2,500 messages at one point recently and I just took the whole file, compressed it and started over. If I ever need to look at those e-mail messages again, I know where to find them.

2.1.12 Don't Confuse Hard Work with Hard Thinking

It's not just enough to work hard. Nobody's going to reward you for working hard. In the end, people don't care how many hours you put in. They care about the quality of your research and the quality of your teaching. So you really have to know what is important and put your best effort into that.

2.1.13 Maintain a Balance

This is not a career to do if you're not having a good time. It's a very consuming job and there are much easier ways to make a living. Most faculty members really love their job but to do that over a long period of time, you have to maintain a balance. Remember that your job is not you. Keep things in balance. Take breaks. Do things for yourself. You'll need a real life. You'll need lots of time to work but you'll also need time to rest, time to exercise, and time for your family and friends. Having a fulfilling outside life will make you more creative and productive as a computer scientist.

> I need at least 7 to 7-1/2 hours of sleep and work is not worth feeling yucky so I always try to get enough sleep.

> I find that if I exercise I actually get that time back. If I exercise for an hour during the day, I'm much more energetic, much more awake at night, and I get more done than if I don't exercise.

> When I first started working, I never took vacations. After our kids started daycare though, we found that all of the daycare centers in our area closed for the last two weeks in August. At first we just worked through this, juggling the kids. Nobody got much done and we were totally stressed by the effort. Then we gave in and planned family vacations for August. We had great times and came back rested and rejuvenated. By the end of September, I'd have done more than if I'd worked straight through.

> I've found that unless I make very specific vacation plans, it never happens. If I leave it at "I'll take off some time this summer," all of a sudden, it's the end of the summer and I haven't taken any time off. I try now to commit myself by buying plane tickets.

> From the very beginning of my career, I believed in vacations and took usually three weeks in he summer all together. On the other hand, I work some weekends in the summer to make up for it. My husband is Australian and you can't exactly go to Australia for a week, so we end up taking long vacations.

2.2 Making it Work with Kids

Balancing a career and a family puts even more pressure on your time.

2.2.1 Accept that Parenting Takes Time

You look at your colleagues who have no kids or have stay-at-home partners and they get to work 19 hours a day. You won't get to do that. Parenting does take time away from your career.

> When you are having a baby, don't expect to do a lot in the first year. Even if somebody takes care of the baby a lot, you'll still be getting back to normal and you'll still be sleep deprived. It's usually not the most creative time, so give yourself a break and assume that you're going to have some sort of slow down the year that you have the baby.

> I didn't have that experience. I didn't lose creative time after the birth of my son. I guess it doesn't hurt to prepare by reducing your responsibilities if you can but I've heard from many women that some of their most intellectually creative times were immediately after having a baby. So don't be too depressed at the thought of losing a lot of time after having a baby.

> I didn't follow the normal tenure path schedule. I started out the regular tenure track and found it unbearable. We had four women in our department but I was the only one with children. The men had wives at home for the most part taking care of their children. They just did not understand the commitment to family. I wanted to volunteer in the schools and be there for sporting events and school plays. By my third year, I was ready to resign but the dean proposed a half-time tenure track position which extended the time to tenure. I have half the teaching load but that's really the only concession. Service is so vaguely defined that it's not clear what half-time is. My research I feel I do full time. I work about 40 hours a week for half pay; basically I used the money to buy time. It was worth it to me and I feel very balanced as a faculty member doing it this way. I see the other faculty members working at a frenzied pace all around me and I feel that I am a little bit slower and that sometimes that makes me feel inferior. Other times it makes me think everyone else is nuts.

> Often we focus on the difficulties of dealing with very young children but your parenting responsibilities and time commitment are the same for older children. My kids are now 11 and 13. I still put tremendous amounts of time into volunteering at their schools and going to all of their sports events, and helping them with their homework. I feel I put a lot of creative energy into them and it's been great.

At the same time that you notice your colleagues working nonstop, you'll also notice the stay-at-home moms who are doing a zillion things with their kids. Having a career takes times away from parenting.

> One year, my mom sent my kids plastic shrink wrap for Easter eggs, plastic sleeves decorated with really tacky cartoon characters. My kids loved them. And they were easy. You put the sleeve around the egg, drop it in boiling water, and presto, it shrink wraps and you're done. We brought the eggs over to my stay-at-home-mom neighbor's house. Her kids had gone out in the woods collecting roots for homemade dyes for their Easter eggs, pasting small leaves and flowers on them for patterns—very neat. It's hard in such situations not to feel inadequate.

Be aware you that you are neither a totally focused computer scientist, nor a full-time mom. You're something in between. Be aware that there will be many trade offs, but there will be terrific rewards as well.

2.2.2 Focus on the Important Things

Invest your time wisely, just as you would at your job. Focus on the things that you or your partner or your kids feel are important, and forget the rest.

> When my kids were younger, I'd make cupcakes for their birthdays for school. These wouldn't be just cupcakes. These would be productions—one year they were decorated with little snowmen with scarves and hats. Around third grade, my daughter balked. She didn't want anything for school. Why not? Because "None of the other kids had to bring in those homemade things," was how she put it. So the cupcakes, while well-intentioned, were a total waste of my time. I didn't particularly enjoy making them and she didn't appreciate it all. On the other hand, I love making Halloween costumes, so whether they like it or not, I do Halloween costumes.

> I volunteer to work at my kid's school but I always try to choose activities that are visible to my child—like going with the class on a field trip or going to school to help with the jogathon—rather than signing up for things—like grading homework papers for the teacher—that my children don't really appreciate.

2.2.3 Get Great Daycare

Spend the time and energy to find a daycare situation that you're really happy with. You don't want to be at work worrying about whether or not the kids are in a suboptimal place. You'll want to know that they are safe, happy, and doing creative things.

> When the kids were little we had a daycare that was so wonderful that the kids were sometimes bummed out that they had to leave. It was really nice for me that I knew they were so well cared for.

> I got up to talk about nannies or it "pays to pay." You are all going to have careers that pay well and the chances are that you are also going to have a spouse who has a career that pays reasonably well. The most important thing you can do is pay for time that you want to spend in ways that are important to you. For me the most effective way to do that has been to pay to have a nanny. It's not the best solution for everyone necessarily but—I know that my husband would agree with me—the best thing we ever did was hire a nanny who also has housekeeping duties. Just pay well. Put energy into the relationship because this is an employee and a semi-member of your family; it does take time to manage the person and to have a good relationship. Spend time picking the right person. It is an incredible boon. Right now we are both at a conference and we are happy because we know that our kids really love our nanny and they're having a good time while we are away. Of course we have bribes like whenever we go away they can each rent a video game and a video and have a trip to Jimmy's where they can buy junk food. (It also pays to bribe.) The bottom line is that a nanny is a wonderful solution. It's really cost effective and if you put an effort into finding the right person your life is 100 times better.

> My husband and I split the day. One of us takes the kids to daycare or school, and the other one picks them up. That way, we each have half the day open and the kids spend less time in daycare than they might otherwise.

2.2.4 Get Lots of Help

Get your spouse or partner involved. Get advice from stay-at-home moms: they always know what the best camps are or who the best teachers are.

I arranged car pools whenever possible. That way, if something came up, I could easily trade off driving responsibilities.

When the kids were too old for daycare, we advertised in the university paper for a sitter who would be at home when they got home. This worked well. We had very qualified college students who had cars. They drove the kids to practices or lessons. They let the kids have friends over. They baked cookies with them.

The kids can help too. We made family chores into family activities. For instance, we all do the grocery shopping together. My kids are getting a little old for that now, but up until now we've done it together. You've got to get your grocery shopping done and it's time that you spend with your kids. We fold clothes together every Sunday night in front of the TV set. The kids also help with yard work and they love to help cook. They feel like they've accomplished something. I try to take advantage of that to get things done and spend time with my kids.

2.2.5 Reduce Teaching Loads When You Need to

Your family will demand more or less attention at various times and you should avail yourself of any options that you might have when the demand is particularly high. Many universities offer parental leaves or extensions to the tenure clock. More informally, some departments will lighten your teaching or committee loads after a baby. Some universities offer "family leave" for emergency situations. In some cases it's not considered good form to extend tenure, and in other places it's acceptable. Find out what the culture of your university is. Take advantage of your options.

My tenure clock was not extended and you should not expect to get it extended but you should ask. I am the only woman on my faculty. In my entire school, with seven departments, there are only five women. They didn't know what to do when I got pregnant; I was the first one who had a baby. I taught class 10 days later. Don't do that.

You should ask for relief from teaching and to stop the tenure clock. Go for it. I made the mistake of not asking. I'm up for tenure in a year and I think that I'll be successful but there is no reason to go through what I did, this is adverse time management. Make things as good for yourself as you can. Everybody wants you to succeed.

I interviewed this year and I'm old enough that I need to have children sometime in the near future. So after I got offers, this was an important negotiation point for me. I told people that I knew I was going to have a baby and that it was going to affect my productivity and that I wanted guarantees that my tenure clock would be frozen. At the university where I am now, four women had gone ahead of me and had children and had gotten tenure, so the chairman there was very understanding. It was no problem, a non-issue. At one of the other schools that I was seriously considering, they had never had a woman faculty member come up through the tenure process and they certainly never had a woman have a baby. When I told them that it was important to me, they went to the dean who said that I would have to take a leave of absence for at least one semester to get my tenure clock frozen. I told them that I couldn't come under those circumstances and so they went back to the dean and they reduced the time but I still would have had to take a leave of absence for a month. I do recommend that you wait until you have an offer before you enter into that negotiation process.

At one point, my son was going through a lot of problems and I

had to take a leave. It's important to understand that these things happen and it's okay.

I also have had two children, one before getting tenure and one after. I think the current way things are set up—what you need to go through to manage both your professional life and your personal life after you have children within the academic environment—is pretty draconian. I think it can be done and it can be very satisfying but many of us are working to change the policies. Certainly one of the things that has been mentioned is trying to negotiate—whether it's before you get to an institution or after you are there—for teaching load reductions.

2.2.6 Maintain a Sense of Humor

Keep in mind that with kids, even the best laid plans don't always work.

We lived in Massachusetts for a long time and I'd send the kids off to school and 10 minutes later they'd walk back in and say, "snow day." What do you do with three kids on a snow day as you're rushing out the door to teach a class?

I have a nanny who is responsible from being there from 8:30 am until 5:30 pm. So I don't have any problems when my kids are sick but when my nanny is sick, my husband and I have this horrible negotiation process of who has to cancel which meetings. But she doesn't get sick very frequently, thank goodness.

Many things that appear to be crises now will make entertaining stories in a few years.

3. EPILOGUE: PERSONAL HARMONY

Be careful not to put your career first. If you do, it will take all of your time and energy and they'll be nothing left for whatever is second.

Everyone searches for harmony in their lives and everyone has to find their own balance. There aren't any simple answers. The tips we've discussed are just that, tips that have worked for some women in some situations. Each of us has to decide on where to put our time and energy. Be true to yourself in making those decisions. And, if things are not working out, don't to be afraid to make changes. Put aside time to really think about your important decisions in a focused way.