

# I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE DOES IT!

*Want to know the secret to having it all? Three UAE women reveal how they've nailed their work-life balance*



## 'CUTTING BACK WORKING HOURS'

*Jodi Davies, 35, is the GM of Source for Consulting Middle East. She is married and has two children, six-year-old Hope and three-year-old George*

"I work part-time and do an average of 20 hours a week. The children are in nursery every morning, which allows me time to completely focus on work, and I have a wonderful nanny, Eden, who looks after them for me if I need to work in the afternoon.

The arrangement works because both Eden and I are flexible and can respond to sudden changes in our routine or unexpected demands that are placed on me through work.

I like that I am available for my children if they need me, but some days I feel like I can't be with them as much as I want to, which can be frustrating. Perfecting the balance is a constant see-saw and I need to work hard to ensure a proper balance.

On the whole, I think that I have it worked out, but I have to admit there are times, as I'm sure there are for all working mums, when I feel sad and

guilty for not spending enough time with the children.

When I feel the balance slipping in favour of work, I am careful to pull it back and my employers are incredibly supportive of this. In fact, I feel very lucky to have a part time job that I can fit in around the children. Every weekend we make an effort to spend quality time together as a family, in the pool, in the park, bike riding or just relaxing at home.

However, it is not possible to spend every hour of every day with your children when you are building a business. If I didn't spend the hours I do at work then the business wouldn't grow and I wouldn't be as fulfilled as I am. And I am hugely proud of what I have achieved in my career.

I don't think motherhood has held back my career at all – in fact, some of my biggest career opportunities have come since having children. In a bizarre way, having children and being supported by my husband has actually made me more risk-taking than ever before. I feel totally empowered to take decisions I perhaps wouldn't have before having children."

## 'CREATING THE PERFECT HOME OFFICE'

*Arwa Hamdieh, 40, is the founder of the Financial Services Association UAE and is a single mother to her five-year-old son*

"As a single working mother I have the extra burden of not being able to share the workload and that can sometimes feel overwhelming. I work 45 hours a week, often in the evenings too, so the ability to work from home is crucial.

I just moved into a new house in Al Furjan Villas which has a simple modern layout and plenty of space to accommodate my needs and those of my son. I have a proper office at home that is completely separate from the other parts of our living space.

What really makes my set-up work is household staff who are responsible and can take initiative – that is so important, especially when I don't have the traditional family support network. I have a full-time nanny and I'm in the process of hiring a driver. Having the right help gives me peace of mind to get on with my work without having to worry at all.

Even though I'm working, I constantly

monitor what's going on at home and I always have a chat in the evening with the nanny to see how things went and plan the next day.

I've learned the importance of writing to-do lists, but what is more important is prioritising the items on that to-do list that will get me closer to my goals in both life and work.

I make sure to do at least one thing with my son every day. On busy days, it might be a short play time and a bed time story. At less busy times, I'll pick him up from school and spend the afternoon with him. My weekends are when I really get to spend quality time with him and bond. We do joint activities, work on school projects and catch up on what happened during the week.

Often, a woman's career has to take a back seat, especially when the children are young, and as mothers, we're often faced with having to make a decision to compromise our advancement. I'm proud of everything I've accomplished despite the difficult circumstances, and I am also proud that I am keeping my dreams alive and working towards achieving them. I think the best lesson you can teach your child is being a good role model."







**'MAKING TIME FOR AFTERNOON PLAY DATES'**  
*Kate Kikano, 34, is the owner of TKD Lingerie. She is married with a two-year-old daughter and is expecting her second child in June*

"My daughter Elodie goes to nursery four mornings a week and, on those days, our full-time maid, Enat, brings her home for lunch and a nap. Enat has a lovely relationship with Elodie and helps me free up valuable time to spend with my daughter.

I spend mornings on the shop floor but aim to make it home by the time Elodie wakes up, so we can have play dates in the afternoon. Wanting to get home on time means I use my hours efficiently at work and I get to have some fun at the end of a busy day.

Owning my own business means that I have the flexibility to work from home and I can keep my own hours, so I will often be back on my laptop after Elodie is in bed. On average, I work about 35 hours a week.

Learning the art of delegation was one of my biggest challenges as I do have some control-freak tendencies! But employing the right people and trusting and empowering them has

limitless benefits. I've realised you don't have to do it all on your own and that it's perfectly okay to ask for help when you need it.

I get the best of both worlds – family life plus a job I love. Having the stimulation of work with some kid-free time in the day definitely makes me a better mum. I appreciate more the time I spend with Elodie and have more patience in both environments. I've learned to ease up on the guilt of not spending 24/7 with my daughter. Instead, I think about how to get the most out of the hours I do get with her.

I think becoming a mother has made me less selfish; I put Elodie's needs ahead of mine. You learn not to sweat the small stuff – who cares if the scatter cushions aren't lined up exactly or there are a few scuffs from a scooter ride along the wall?

My life is chaotic, but I believe in structure for Elodie, especially with meal and bed times. As a family, we always start the day together over breakfast before I take Elodie to nursery. My husband Fadi, a banker, gets home to do bath and bedtime and I usually hang out with them in the bathroom as we catch up on the day's happenings and splash around." ●