

# PUBLICATION

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## Five Lessons I Learned from Baker Donelson's Work-Life Warriors

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**In a firm bursting with talented and dynamic women, I was humbled to receive Baker Donelson's 2017 Work-Life Warrior Award. Admittedly, the past year included some atypical hurdles for my family – such as a house fire that forced us out of our home for 12 weeks; a new baby born with cataracts requiring multiple, extensive surgeries; all while I was up for shareholder consideration and my husband was working hard to get the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium ready to open by August 26, 2017. Luckily, I work alongside women who balance robust practices in addition to managing ailing parents, sick children and serving their communities in leadership positions. How can it be done? Here is what I have witnessed from my mentors and applied to my own life:**

1. First, and probably most important, is having a supportive workplace. Baker Donelson obviously fits that bill. Despite the challenges in my personal life, I received the necessary resources from Baker Donelson, including a flexible working schedule, 16 weeks of paid parental leave, leave hours and "dollars" to capture what my billable hours and collections would have looked like, but for my leave. I was able to focus on what I am here to do – provide quality legal work for my clients. Also, I have excellent internal role models: our firm leadership and shareholders with large practices make time for activities beyond work.
2. It is helpful to have a strong support network outside of the office. My husband, who also has a demanding job, shares in our household responsibilities. We are blessed with a wonderful nanny and local family who help us. In some cases, my parents and children have traveled with me (on our own dime) for out-of-state conferences, depositions or hearings.
3. Making sure the professional and personal commitments are met often requires creative problem-solving, juggling multiple balls at all times and anticipating problems – skills that we use daily during our law practice. I think lawyers are especially well-equipped to handle the juggle of a rich personal life with the demands of a law practice because the necessary skills to do both transfer quite well. When the first two steps are met, it is a natural progression that lawyers can run their home and practice effectively and efficiently.
4. I've learned that "work time" and "family time" are not always mutually exclusive. Some of my mentors have met clients through a child's sporting activities, or by serving on a public interest board together. Baker Donelson supports these efforts, and the result is a win for both the firm and the attorney.
5. Not everything runs perfectly 100 percent of the time. Letting go of some of that control and perfectionism is also a requirement for making the balance work. [Christy Crider](#), chair of Baker Donelson's Women's Initiative, nailed this premise in her article entitled "[Nobody is Perfect, So Cut Yourself Some Slack](#)." I refer back to that article often, and it gives me peace with whatever life is currently throwing at me and the motivation to keep going.

*About the author: Jodi Taylor, previously a shareholder in Baker Donelson's Atlanta office, currently serves an associate general counsel with Brasfield & Gorrie, LLC, and was the recipient of the 2017 Baker Donelson Work-life Warrior Award.*