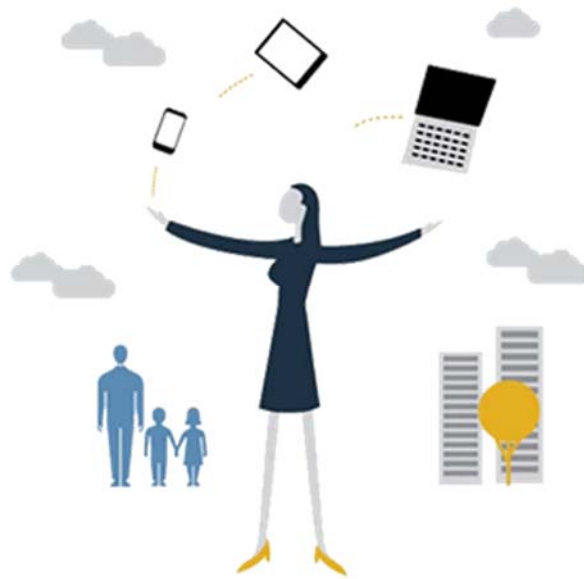


# Balancing in Heels

Self, Family, and the  
Practice of Law



Elizabeth King

**Job Title:** Attorney, Family Division Rice & Rose Law Firm (primary focus is divorce & paternity)

**City:** Daytona Beach, Florida

**Number of Children/Other Dependents:** I have been married for thirty years. My husband shared his first three daughters with me and we have a son and a daughter-both recent college graduates. We have four grandchildren and I am the oldest of six siblings with a very large extended family.

**Do you think having “it all” is realistic or overrated? Why?**

If “having it all” means having every marker of in success as defined by the popular culture, it is probably overrated.

**What does having “it all” mean to you?**

I define “having it all” as possessing a very high degree of personal satisfaction in all areas of your life. In that sense, it is very possible.

**What is the best advice you have ever received on balancing your personal and professional lives?**

A fortune cookie at a pivotal moment in my life read: “You never know what you can do until you try.” I keep that fortune and remind myself of it periodically.

**If you had an extra hour in your day, how would you spend it?**

Whatever it would be it would involve fresh air.

**Looking back at when you started in the profession, and knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your younger self?**

Evaluate your hesitation to jump in for just a minute and then move forward. With what I know now as a divorce lawyer- I would say, even when the children are young, go out with your spouse once a week just the two of you.

**Do you deal with guilt in trying to balance your personal and professional lives?**

For me it’s all life and all personal-I acknowledge that sometimes adjustments need to be made, but no I don’t feel guilty. The demands of society on women are unrelenting at present.

**What single change do you believe would have the biggest impact on work life balance or quality of life?**

Having a full-time housekeeper or a devoted wife!

**What part of “balance” do you struggle with?**

I struggle with leaving my work at work. My mind goes to problem solving at all hours and will not stick to a strict schedule. Meditation helps with that.

**What part of “balance” are you improving at?**

I have taken in a Bikram yoga session at least five days a week for the past five years. That keeps me straight.

**As a working parent, how do you balance your career and your role as a parent?**

My children are grown now and through college. They never missed a meal through law school and twelve years of practice and so far they are decent citizens. The role of a parent is to set an example of civilized conduct and where possible I did that.

**How important is civic and/or professional involvement to you and why?**

I am involved in civic life because I enjoy meeting people in all walks and socializing. I contribute where I can, but I always get back more than I receive in terms of rewards. Participating brings all good things, so I tend to overdo it and have to dial back on the schedule at times.

**What's the advice you would give a young lawyer seeking to strike a "balance" between family, self, and the practice of law or achieve better quality of life?**

Within each of are many "unlived lives." Acknowledge that practicing law is not *you*, it is one aspect of you. Cultivate yourself, fascinate yourself, challenge yourself, and enjoy yourself fully.



## Katherine Hurst Miller

**Job Title:** Partner at the law firm of Cobb Cole  
President-Elect of The Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division  
**City:** Daytona Beach, FL

**Number of Children/Other Dependents:** 1 crazy, awesome little girl

### **Do you think having “it all” is realistic or overrated? Why?**

Bahahahaha... Can you hear me laughing out loud over here? Having it all in the superhero sense, being everywhere at all times and doing an awesome job with everything is so unrealistic as to be laughable. I love how the tv writer and producer and mom Shonda Rhimes phrased it in a 2014 commencement address, “Whenever you see me somewhere succeeding in one area of my life, that almost certainly means I am failing in another area of my life.” That being said, having it all in the sense of having a fulfilling work life and a fulfilling personal life, now that is definitely possible. You just might have to hire someone to help clean your house. I came to that last conclusion about a year ago, and happiness and cleanliness increased about 200% at my house. Or whatever that outsourced thing is that makes it possible for you to do what you enjoy.

### **What does having “it all” mean to you?**

For me, the phrase “having it all” it means my life is overflowing with blessings and choices to make. A career that is important to me, a family that is important to me, activities that I do outside work and home that are important to me. What an amazing life that is! I could have been born 150 years earlier and live in a little house on the prairie with very few choices or control over my life. I could have been born in some other part of the world today and have very few choices or control over my life. Instead, I live in an era and a country where I can choose what job to have, what person to marry, what town to live in, where to worship, how to educate my daughter, where to spend my time and talent and money, etc. And if I step back and look at the big messy Monet painting that is my life, I am thankful for my blessings and happy with my choices.

**What is the best advice you have ever received on balancing your personal and professional lives?**

Plan ahead so you can spend your time doing what is most important to you. And take at least one full day off from work each week, which for me most weeks is Sunday. Of course, there are times in your life, like studying for the bar exam or trying that big case, that you can't do the things you want to and you can't take a day off. But most days or weeks or years, you sure can.

**If you had an extra hour in your day, how would you spend it?**

I'd want to spend it reading or exercising, but knowing me, I'm more likely to waste it online. Maybe I'd take that good advice above about planning ahead and spend it working so I could save up a bunch of those hours and take a two-week cruise with my family. We could use a vacation that doesn't include a lawyers' conference.

**Looking back at when you started in the profession, and knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your younger self?**

My younger self didn't have a husband or child, so I'd tell myself to spend the time learning a few more things, volunteering a few more hours, and saving a few more dollars because my time commitments and financial obligations have only increased the older I have gotten. I'm pretty sure my mom told me that, and I didn't listen. But readers, please listen! It's great advice!!

I'd also have a whole lot of advice about maternity leave because I think I did pretty much everything wrong! I'm a believer in bringing work home, but I should not have attempted it, even the little bit I got accomplished, on maternity leave. And maybe not volunteered to write a moot court problem and organize a legal conference. I should have drawn more definite lines between home and work and been in the moment at home with my child and come back into the office to be the moment with my work and waited for work to get caught up before I dove back into other professional obligations. I was fortunate to have paid maternity leave. And I had unbelievable, incredible support from family, friends, co-workers, clients, and even opposing counsel. And still mentally, I couldn't find the right balance. But if I had done it differently, maybe I wouldn't be where I am today.

**Do you deal with guilt in trying to balance your personal and professional lives?**

Yes, including guilt for the sacrifices that my family makes. And jealousy of people who make it look easy. But letting those emotions eat at you is not the most productive use of time, and you'll probably eat other things as a consequence. Instead of spending time harboring guilt or eating ice cream, we should spend that time being grateful and possibly writing long thank you letters to our moms and the other wise women who have shaped us. I know I can never say thank you to my mom enough, who made and continues to make a TON of professional sacrifices for me, all while having a very successful career.

**What single change do you believe would have the biggest impact on work life balance or quality of life?**

If I were the king of the world, school hours for children and work hours for adults would be more closely aligned. If you want to have some MAJOR work-life balance guilt, I recommend leaving work early to pick up your child who had to stay late at school waiting for you. That's a #fail.

**What part of "balance" do you struggle with?**

Many parts of it. Communicating ahead of time when I need someone to help me. Making time for my husband and my friends. Finding time to exercise. Knocking out work when I sit in front of a computer. Being in the moment. And whether I'm in balance or out of balance when I do things like answer emails from the beach with my family.

**What part of "balance" are you improving at?**

Well, the cool thing is that, as you become a partner of a law firm or the president of an organization, you have some control over balance for yourself and for others. As long as the work gets done, you can add a doctor's appointment or a haircut or a coffee break with an old friend into your daytime schedule, and you can encourage others to do the same. You can make sure some of the afterhours activities your organization does are kid- and spouse-friendly or health conscious. And I'm getting way less judge-y of how other people find their balance without worrying that I should be doing it that way. As comedian Amy Poehler says, "Good for her! Not for me."

**As a working parent, how do you balance your career and your role as a parent?**

With insane amounts of help from other people and a belief that seeing me work will inspire my daughter to have a career that is important to her one day. Also, thank you for asking about "working parents," because the words "working mom" are like nails on a chalkboard to me. Why do we say "working mom" but not "working dad?" No one ever calls my husband a working dad, they just assume he's a dad and he works. And, in his case, that's a correct assumption – he's an awesome dad and an awesome lawyer. But I'd love us to get to a place where we don't make assumptions about whether parents should or should not work or whether young professionals should or should not have kids.

**How important is civic and/or professional involvement to you and why?**

Very important. I'm a huge believer in getting involved. First, if you want to be self-interested about it, getting involved in community or professional organizations feels good, allows you to make friends, develops new skills, and gives you a potential avenue for future business development. But secondly and more importantly, giving back is just the right thing to do. There are immense needs out there, and lawyers have valuable skills to donate to charitable causes, civic causes, and professional organizations.

**What's the advice you would give a young lawyer seeking to strike a "balance" between family, self, and the practice of law or achieve better quality of life?**

The big-picture advice is to make sure your self-worth isn't tied up in your work. The practical advice is to find the right place to work and find the right person to marry. I don't believe your job has to be some all-consuming, life-fulfilling passion, but it has to be worthy of your time and you have to be able to handle it when you lose cases or hit a rough patch with clients or times are tough. And your spouse has to be someone you want to come home to at the end of the day and who will take care of you when you get sick and who will help you change diapers if you decide to have kids.

**Any other parting words of advice?**

Read *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg. And then read *Bossypants* by Tina Fey. Two wonderful books on women's leadership. You'll learn, and you'll laugh.



**Honorable Margaret W. Hudson**

**Job Title:** Circuit Judge

**City:** DeLand, Florida

**Number of Children/Other Dependents:** 1 grown stepdaughter (and 2 adorable grand-children)

**Do you think having "it all" is realistic or overrated? Why?**

I do think having it all is realistic. However, every aspect of your life cannot be perfect. You can make time for each aspect, but the quantity or quality of each aspect may not be as much as you need or want. For example, on top of work, committee meetings, social events, phone calls to your parents, time with your husband and children (together AND separately), you can fit in exercise. But it probably won't be as often as you would want to or should exercise. It is all about

compromise and balance. Being balanced doesn't mean that everything is perfect. It means that you decide to look beyond the imperfection.

**What does having "it all" mean to you?**

Being able to actively participate in those aspects of my life that are meaningful and important to me. My "all" will look different than someone else's "all." Being fully engaged with what matters to me is having "it all."

**What is the best advice you have ever received on balancing your personal and professional lives?**

Most of the advice I received in my early career was not about balancing. In fact, in my first legal job I was advised I was taken off the partner track after getting married – a direct quote: "well, obviously, now you are more concerned about making cookies than your legal career." I interpreted that "advice" to mean that if I was going to be successful, I was going to have to put my job and ambitions first. Sometime later, a non-lawyer friend said that I should focus on what I wanted and not what I thought I should do. That is when things started to come into focus for my career.

**If you had an extra hour in your day, how would you spend it?**

Reading fiction because it liberates me from analytical thinking, making me more creative and willing to "think outside the box." Or, looking at a sunset and ruminating about my day.

**Looking back at when you started in the profession, and knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your younger self?**

Be more willing to take risks. If I wanted to volunteer to participate in a legal or civic organization or change jobs or modify my career path, because I thought that would be personally rewarding, I would have made those attempts without consideration of the naysayers that said that's not what I should do to be successful. I would tell myself to not be so afraid. I would also say ask for help. Many friends and mentors may be unwilling to "butt in" but are more than willing to give advice or assistance if asked.

**Do you deal with guilt in trying to balance your personal and professional lives?**

Not really – at least now. There have been many commitments or events that I have had to cancel or miss due to work, but only one event in my personal life for which I cancelled work – the birth of my first grandchild. I am blessed with family and friends that accept my priorities and do not attempt to make me feel guilty. Why should I add it on myself? More and more, I am owning my decisions and accepting the view of balance that works for me, my family and friends. There is very little room for guilt in that view of *my* balance.

**What single change do you believe would have the biggest impact on work life balance or quality of life?**



A collaborative effort among colleagues to 1) accept that everyone's personal life is important; 2) cover for those who need extra time and expect the same in return; 3) hold everyone accountable for honoring both work and personal commitments.

**What part of "balance" do you struggle with?**

Saying no. Even when my plate is full and I may reduce my effectiveness to present commitments; it is hard to say no. Especially if someone I want to work with asks or it is some project I am interested in, I struggle with declining so as not to add too much to my plate.

**What part of "balance" are you improving at?**

Referring back to the context of my answer to #11 above, I am improving at owning my decisions and not feeling guilty about those choices.

**How important is civic and/or professional involvement to you and why?**

Civic and professional involvement is very important for personal growth. Involvement in these activities gives me an opportunity to be involved with people from other areas of practice and walks of life. Rather than being limited to what is known and comfortable, it gives me an opportunity to learn and grow. I feel it is also important to remember that service to the community – whether the civic or legal community – is important because I benefitted from those communities and owe them my service in return.

**What's the advice you would give a young lawyer seeking to strike a "balance" between family, self, and the practice of law or achieve better quality of life?**

Stay true to yourself. Make decisions that are best for you and your family. Fully engage and participate in those areas of your life that you have decided upon. If you aren't happy with those decisions, it is likely not a good fit or "balance" for you. Don't be afraid to be different and try new things. That is the only way you will find what does make you the most fulfilled in all aspects of your life. If you make a mistake, don't hide; learn from it and move forward. Ask for advice and listen; you don't have to agree with the advice, but listen. Most of all, take each day and decide to make it the best you can in the circumstances you are in that day. Tomorrow is another day and you will get another chance.

**Any other parting words of advice?**

Work hard, never stop learning, always be thankful, stay honest to yourself and others. Smile. Breathe.



## Honorable Sandra Unchurch

**Job Title:** Circuit Judge, 7th Circuit

**City:** DeLand, Florida

**Number of Children/Other Dependents:** I have a very supportive and understanding husband and two terrific sons all of whom keep me very busy and very "on my toes!"

### **Do you think having "it all" is realistic or overrated? Why?**

I think "having it all" is unrealistic AND overrated. I think "having it all" is a judgment we cast upon others without knowing them and their lives. I think if you ask someone who appears to "have it all" if they feel that way they would likely laugh and say "if you only knew.."

### **What does having "it all" mean to you?**

To me having "it all" is possible if you define "it all" very simply and not in an all-encompassing way. To me it means health for me and my family, family members that love and nurture each other through good times and bad and a career that can help sustain the real and recreational needs of my family. Yes, I've got that. Does that mean that every day of my life is easy and perfect and smooth? No way. Life is messy. Some days I deal well with the mess, some days the mess drives me insane, some days I am the mess.

### **What is the best advice you have ever received on balancing your personal and professional lives?**

"Love the life you live and live the life you love." It's simple but says it all.

### **If you had an extra hour in your day, how would you spend it?**

This reminds me of the question of "what would your greatest regret be on your death bed?" Would it be not working more? Of course not. For my extra hour I would spend it reading Harry Potter

with my 8 year old son, talking politics with my oldest son or just enjoying a quiet evening on the back porch catching up with my husband.

**Looking back at when you started in the profession, and knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your younger self?**

Two things:

1) Learn to love the learning process because you will spend your whole life doing it. 2) Spend time learning to write, write well, write forcefully and write with passion. There is power in the written word whether it is a love letter, a work email or a letter to the editor.

**Do you deal with guilt in trying to balance your personal and professional lives?**

I read somewhere that the most wasted emotions/thoughts are worry, guilt and regret. With worry you are concerning yourself and expending emotional energy on something that has not happened and may not happen. With regret and guilt you are concerning yourself and expending emotional energy on something that has already happened and cannot be changed. I try to live my life in the present – trying to become a better person, each day, now.

**What single change do you believe would have the biggest impact on work life balance or quality of life?**

I would love to see large law firms begin to understand and accept that hours logged at a desk to not necessarily correlate to increased profits. If a workday could be defined in terms of work accomplished, tasks completed and/or satisfied clients instead of number of hours worked, we would see happier, healthier lawyers who are more productive and more professional.

**What part of “balance” do you struggle with?**

I worry sometimes that I am going to leave this world not having made any lasting impact on it and then I realize how very egocentric that is. I need to realize that my sphere of influence is very small and manageable and if I can leave this world knowing that my friends and family have wonderful, warm, fond memories of me, that is enough. That’s just perfect actually.

**What part of “balance” are you improving at?**

I am learning to embrace the concept that sometimes simply have a task “done” is good enough – perfection is no longer my goal. And yes, I read that somewhere too – I read a lot!

**As a working parent, how do you balance your career and your role as a parent?**

I had to realize that I am not the only one that can have a positive influence on my children and I am not the only one that can give them love and attention. I have learned that they don’t need me 100% of the time and that they benefit immensely from being under the guidance of others with different priorities and skill sets than what I can offer. My children started as infants in daycare (which I always insisted be called “school”). Because of early schooling (as opposed to “in spite of” early schooling) they are self-sufficient, well-adjusted, independent, social and flexible. My

husband and I are huge pieces of the child-rearing puzzle but we are not the only pieces – that’s the balance. But after a long day, it’s important to get home and plug in 100% to your family – a distracted parent doesn’t count.

**How important is civic and/or professional involvement to you and why?**

This is a tough one for me – I feel thankful and empowered by my professional involvements and I have lucked into wonderful career choices and life-long friends because of that involvement. I however have faltered in the civic involvement department. That’s the area I have had to let go of. I have always envisioned myself finding my true civic calling or passion once my kids are in college and I have more free time. I hope that happens.

**What’s the advice you would give a young lawyer seeking to strike a “balance” between family, self, and the practice of law or achieve better quality of life?**

Try to do what gives you joy that day. Sometimes it feels great to get out in the sun and watch your kids play soccer, or go for a run. Sometimes it feels terrific to dig into work, hit your stride, work late into the night and experience that sense of accomplishment. I would say each and every day is a new balancing act and you just need to be in tune enough with yourself to know what YOU need each day to keep you moving joyfully into the next.

**Any other parting words of advice?**

In the true spirit of the Balancing in Heels Project my advice is “never underestimate how terrific a great pair of shoes can make you feel!”