



**THE PARALLEL LIVES OF OUR IPS #7**

Bridging parenthood and consulting – a guest  
article from Patrick James Burks

**1. How would you describe your current family situation?**

My current family situation is fairly straightforward, with a slightly 21st-century twist. I live with my husband and we're lucky enough to have two children, who are 3 and 5 years old. Diana, our daughter, is the oldest, and Tiago, our son, is the youngest. As a two-dad household, we get a lot of questions about our journey of creating our family, and we're very happy to explain that we're the biological fathers of the kids, who have been with us since the day they were each born.

**2. What does a typical day look like and what types of family decisions do you make on a daily basis?**

I think a typical day for a family can be described in the same way that a consultant would describe their work... there's never a typical day. Saying that, there are a few themes I can pull out.

- I start my day about 6.45am to get up before the kids and prepare breakfast for them.
- The kids will get up just after 7am, and we eat breakfast together until about 7.30am.
- Between 7.30am and 8.15am, we help the kids brush their teeth and get dressed, and get them ready for the school day by packing their bags with snacks.
- At 8.15am, we wait for the school bus to pick them up – then I wave goodbye and my day can start in earnest.
- Most of my clients are based in the UK, Switzerland or the US, so I often have a bit of time after dropping the kids off when I can hit the gym to keep in shape.
- I'm lucky enough to be able to walk to my co-working space near the river in Lisbon, and I'll hop on my computer and start working properly by about 10am.
- I grab a quick bite near my office for lunch, then work until about 5pm, when I walk back home to meet the kids as they get dropped off.

- From the time the kids get dropped off at home until dinner at 6pm, I try to play with them or, if the weather is good, find a playground so that they can use up their extra energy – that's if I'm not on calls or getting ready for a big client update.
- We help them with dinner and then it's time for them to have a bath/shower, brush their teeth and get into their pajamas.
- Normally, we will all gather round the TV for a short show on Netflix, which the kids have to choose together, so there aren't any arguments. Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood seems to be winning a lot these days.
- After this, we convince the kids it's time for bed, read a story (Goodnight Moon and Little Blue Truck are all-time favorites), sing Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, then give goodnight hugs and kisses.
- Once they're settled in, I normally go back to work for a couple of hours (grabbing dinner at some point – with my husband, if I'm lucky) to catch up on the afternoon, get in a few more calls/meetings and make sure I'm set up for the next day.
- I'm in bed and chilling by about 11pm/midnight, ready to do it again the next day.

The types of decisions I make on a daily basis in regards to my family are, I imagine, pretty typical for a consultant. Since my husband and I are both in professional services, we're often trying to figure out how at least one of us will be in Lisbon to make sure the kids will be taken care of. The remainder of the decisions are usually around how to get them fed, cleaned and clothed while not completely exhausting the two of us. On weekends, I switch into a child entertainer/taxi driver, trying to make sure we all get a bit of rest, a bit of fun and a bit of time with my husband's family, who live close by.

### 3. How do you achieve a work-life balance as a parent?

In short, I don't. Don't get me wrong... I love it, but it's an impossible mission if you're trying to excel on all fronts at the same time. It's a bit more complicated than work-life balance – it actually comes down to two big buckets and a bunch of smaller ones:

#### A. Life

1. Taking care of myself
2. Managing my relationship with my husband
3. Managing my relationship with my daughter
4. Managing my relationship with my son
5. Managing the dynamics between family members

#### B. Work

1. Serving current clients
2. Future client development

#### C. Everything else

I mostly try not to completely suck at anything – being mindful about how much I've focused on one area over the others in the last few days or few weeks. I always want to make sure I'm delivering great results for clients but, honestly, if my family needs something and my husband isn't available to pitch in, then I have to ask for a bit of understanding. On the flip side, my kids understand that I sometimes have to work, so can't play Lego with them or always serve dinner on time.



**4. What are the biggest challenges you encounter, both at home and at work? And how do you get around them?**

My biggest challenge is always running out of time – always. Since starting a family, I've got better at time management, prioritization and multitasking. Time management helps me keep perspective on my current task. I ask myself how long I need and how long I have to do something. If I can't realistically get something done in a timeframe, then I don't promise myself or others it'll get done. Prioritizing basically helps me understand which fire I need to fight next, so that I can give my focus to one issue at a time. Multitasking isn't a natural strength of mine but I've learned to develop it since having kids – I think all parents do this.

**5. What advice would you give to IPs with families?**

The best advice I ever got regarding raising a family was 'Don't take anyone else's advice if you didn't ask for it'. Every person and every family is so different that any advice I give would essentially be useless – listen to yourself and your family and take it from there. When in doubt, ask someone you trust.



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