

Inside THE MAGAZINE FOR NEW CASTLE AND BEYOND CHAPPAQUA



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Moms in Biz! The Parenting Skills that can Help a Business Thrive or even Soar

By Lisa Ballou

I was incredibly inspired by the advice and wisdom shared by so many of the working moms in our community. It is not surprising that a lot of the women I spoke with garnered their most valuable business skills from mothering—and vice versa. Mothers are our heroes, our role models and our support system. But let's not forget that mothers are human too. We are doing it all the best we can—some days, it's remarkable how well it works and some days we just fall short. For each individual, the notion of work life balance is different—but one thing is for certain, when we let go of unrealistic expectations, it is that much easier.

In honor of Mother's Day, take a deep breath and enjoy some of the tips from some incredible local entrepreneurs, businesswomen and valued employees who graciously shared their insights about how they do it all...

Dawn Greenberg, owner of Chappaqua's brand new Aurora trade good store, and mother of two boys ages five and eight, says the advantage of being a mom is having all of her wonderful mom friends help her open a store that will carry beautiful things made primarily by moms around the globe who are all trying to make their families lives better. Julie Balber, a fellow Roaring Brook mom, and Melissa Cotto of Casa Tile make up her core team. Dawn estimates that women create 90% of fair trade goods.

"The mascot for the store is a wooden figure from Papua New Guinea that I always referred to as grandma. She'll be watching over Aurora."

For Dr. Maria Briones, balancing the responsibilities of motherhood and medicine on a daily basis brings out the best of each role for her and helps her appreciate both jobs more. She explained, "When I see my patients, it brings out the mother in me. Medicine and motherhood can both be humbling. As a mother, I am humbled by my children's unconditional love and as a Dr., by my patients appreciation expressed in a multitude of ways. My children and my patients both have complete trust in me. They each look to me for encouragement, for better health and for confidence to lead a successful life."

As a child psychologist, Dr. Melissa Camhy's experiences as a mother are integrally related to her work. She has a great appreciation of the profound influence the peer culture exerts on children and understands how challenging it is to be a child and teen in today's high speed, technologically-driven world. "I feel an increased sense of empathy when counseling parents. Once you've been through the trenches of raising children, you develop the kind of on the job training that

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facilitates a strong, positive working alliance with parents which, in turn, enhances one's ability to treat their children," said Dr. Camhy, mother of three children ages 21, 18, and 14.

Susan Pecker of The Camp Connection notes that one of the overlapping skills of being a camp advisor and being a mom is knowing how to listen and think about which questions to ask that will give the most information to do her job the best way possible. "Sometimes parents confide in me not only about their child's strengths but also what they hope their child can "gain" from a camp experience and that is when the "mommy" in me comes out; I need to be compassionate and non-judgmental." The bottom line is that whether being a mother or camp advisor, the goal is the same: creating successful, independent and self-confident children through positive, learning experiences.

"Being a mother is the most difficult job," says Yulia Omelich, CEO, of COUTUREDossier in Chappaqua. "If you know how to run a family unit, you will be successful running your own business." The primary motherly qualities that Yulia feels impact her business the most are loyalty and integrity. "You must be faithful to each client. Sometimes, I see that my clients are not sure if they want to part with their treasures. They are not ready, and I help them understand that. We are in the sales business but we are not here to make a quick sale." Yulia aims to understand her clients' needs and concerns first. "Honesty always pays off, helps your goodwill and your bottom line in a long-run."

"Motherhood taught me how to negotiate and think "outside the box" to craft a solution so that everyone wins!" explained Susan Biggar, a licensed Real Estate Salesperson at Prudential Douglas Elliman. Susan has worked in sales for 18 years, before, during and after having her three sons, who are now ages 18, 16 and 13.

Biggar says that sales taught her how to listen and work toward a solution. "A bit of humor helps too. Those are the skills I bring everyday to buyers and sellers in the real estate market."

Chappaqua dermatologist Lydia Evans, M.D., says that being a mother has taught her to be more patient and open-minded. "I quickly learned that what was helpful and effective in raising one child was not always applicable to my other children." This is an excellent reminder for a physician.

Whether she is educating someone about his or her skin condition or designing a treatment plan, Dr. Evans carefully considers the person in front of her. An individual's needs, both physical and psychological, are just that-individual. Each person needs to be cared for and treated accordingly.

She will be applying that basic principle too at Oasis Day Spa, where she has begun to offer med spa services including Botox, Restalyne, Juvederm or Sculptra treatments while relaxing in a beautiful spa setting.

"Nothing teaches you how to juggle better than motherhood and no one juggles better than a working mother/grandmother," says Andrea Moss, executive director, Granite Real Estate Tax Consultants. She has a 31 year-old daughter and a 27 year-old son as well as a one year-old granddaughter. She is the type of wife and mother who attempts to do everything for everyone and in the office that role is not any different. "Like my children, my coworkers look to me for sage advice, constant support, and thoughtful opinions on both a professional level and personal one. Handling difficult situations and uncomfortable conversations are responsibilities that typically fall on my shoulders. What prepares you for that better than motherhood? Nothing."

Yona Strougo, Sales Associate with Houlihan Lawrence, reveals that the biggest lesson her two boys have taught her over the last 14 years is patience. "I still haven't mastered patience, but it is a great lesson to learn. I find that some clients...both buyers and sellers require a lot of my patience. Many times it will take a ton of visits to find the

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perfect home for a buyer. When it comes to selling these days patience is key...many homes are taking longer to sell. I have got to have patience with dealing with my kids and when I go to work the same holds true for my clients."

Le Jardin du Roi's manager Wendy Egan is a single mother. Her five year-old daughter Brady has taught her a very important skill when it comes to feeding other children who frequent the restaurant. "I can relate to the children who are fussy eaters. I try to cater to their needs by making suggestions to the parents about what the children may like to eat." Often Brady will accompany Wendy to work at the restaurant, where she enjoys trying to help her mom and the rest of the staff do their job.

While teaching full time, working on a Master's degree four nights a week, tutoring students for the SATs and ACTs, all the while in her 3rd trimester, Kelli MacDonald thought, "Having kids can't be harder than this." The college advisor and math specialist for College Prep, NY, soon learned otherwise raising her two girls, now two and four. "I thought my education would give me the best insight on how to do my job, and yet being a mother has taught me something unavailable in the classroom: Patience. Persistence. Consistency. Compassion. It doesn't matter if they're 4 or 17, nothing compares to the look on their face when they achieve an important goal and start to realize their potential!"

Lynn Puro owner of MARCH Boutique, says motherhood taught her to understand the necessity of good time management. She spends her days balancing her work with the never-ending task of keeping her family's busy schedule on track. "At MARCH, we appreciate and cater to new moms' busy schedules. We outfit them in everything from something to wear to tomorrow night's important dinner to a cute top for the weekend, or even a whole new wardrobe for the upcoming season."

Motherhood has played an important role in the daily business life of Oasis Day Spa's owner Marti Schoenberg. She feels that no one knows how to multi-task better than a mother. "Whether I'm evaluating new massage therapists, new retail products, or designing the aesthetics of the spa décor, a small business owner's work is never done, just like my job at home." In fact, just last week Marti was in Chicago for a trade show, yet was still mothering her children a thousand miles away. "Being able to balance the many roles I play is just another part of being 'Spa Momma' at work and home."

At The Perennial Chef, "our unforgettable moms contribute discipline, organization, responsibility and empathy to the daily life of the business," explains partner Françoise Jarry. Here's what some of them bring to the table: Susana reports to the kitchen at 4:30 a.m. Juggling a schedule for her husband and parents, she brings her organization and communication skills to the kitchen team. At 7 a.m., Rochelle reports to the store where she takes charge of the daily operations with the same discipline and sense of responsibility she used to raise her three boys. For Leslie, being a working mom is all about multitasking and caring. In her own words, "caring for our customer's health is the reason why she gets up every morning and rushes to her greenhouse where she grows the organic greens and produce which will be used in The Perennial Chef's dishes."

Sheila Siderow, owner of Siderow Realty Group, moved to Chappaqua in 1972, with three small children. When she went to work as a realtor, she says taxis were her best friend to carpool her children. Her other tips for creating balance include: Establish rules: home at 3 o'clock when children come home from school (she would leave for appointments but not before a good snack and some chatting with the kids). No phone calls at dinnertime or after 9 p.m., and charity to others. Sheila also offers these words of wisdom, "Be creative, have a sky is the limit attitude, make mistakes and learn. Finally? Have a good laugh."

Two moms at William Raveis Real Estate, Cindy Glynn and Danae Richards, together offered these thoughts about how parenting enhance their day to day work.

The old joke says that kids don't come with directions. As a Mom, however, your values are the roadmap to all of your decisions regarding your child: this is true of your business intuitions as well.

We all try to be a "Supermom," but in reality that is not possible on a daily basis as a Mom or a business person. It is important to gain confidence in your ability to mother on a very realistic basis. In your business, setting realistic attainable goals will set you up for success.

If you treat each child as an individual and realize that not all children are the same and their needs and wants differ, this easily adapts to your clients as well! Lastly, listen to your children. At the end of their school day and your work day, the first 20 minutes at the end of the day will tune you into to what is going on with their lives. In business, listen to your clients' desires, make notes and revisit often.

Finally, when Meg Nakamura, General Manager, of the newly opened World Seido Karate in Elmsford, first heard about this story, her thought immediately went to her own mother. "I know, I am biased, but I really feel like my mother goes above and beyond." When her father founded Seido Karate 35 years ago, her mother was her dad's rock. "My mom has been nothing but selfless—whether it comes to helping with my father's business, being a good wife, or taking care of us kids." She will probably hate that I wrote this because she doesn't like getting attention, but it was important to me that she gets some recognition for a lifetime of amazing accomplishments."

This entry was posted on April 24, 2011, under [In and Around Town](#).

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