

# JASMINE DAYA, MANAGING PRINCIPAL: ‘GENDER, IN THE FIELD OF LAW, IS IRRELEVANT, BECAUSE MONEY TALKS’



In [Books](#) • [Add Comment](#)

There's this person I look up to, one I secretly think is not a human but a machine. Not only does she have three kids, but she is a published author, an expert in her field both on television and print, one of Toronto's most popular influencer, and immensely respected by her peers. Which is why I think she is also secretly a robot, because how does one person accomplish all this and still look so put together and drop dead gorgeous?

Which then brings me to my ultimate question: how are parents the most productive people on the face of the Earth? Considering they have a bazillion more responsibilities than non-parents, how are they waking up every morning, and totally slaying it?

Another case in point: Toronto-based Jasmine Daya.



Life turned upside-down when Jasmine, who was then a law student, got unexpectedly pregnant. What could have derailed her ambitious career turned out to be the best-unexpected bump in the road as she not only finished school, but went on to become a lawyer and managing principal, mother of three, published author, and a lifestyle blogger.

Q1. Even though more women are educated in law, significantly fewer become partners. What were the challenges you had to overcome?

More than half of my law school class consisted of women and even back then we would hear about women leaving practice altogether or working in government jobs or as in-house counsel — which meant fewer hours and less pay than private practice. Although the statistics appear disappointing, it's up to women to make a choice on what they want for their lives. There are women, who prefer being in-house counsel because they want to spend more time at home and that's okay. Statistics alone don't tell the full story.

During my early years as an associate, I experienced significant challenges, not because I am a woman, but because I was young and inexperienced. Senior lawyers would pile on work because as a new lawyer, I was cheap labor. Opposing counsel would behave aggressively trying to take advantage of my unfledged knowledge and skill set. Judges weren't always that nice either — feeling that they needed to impart their wisdom on me by being harsh.

With young children, work stress can be more than what women want or can endure. It's not that men don't have children, but they aren't bearing them, so it's different.

In my case, the stressful legal environment drove me to work hard. I completed my work without any complaints and remained cordial to senior and aggressive opposing counsel. I acquired as much knowledge as I could by asking questions and participated in as many proceedings and meetings that were open to me. I attended continuing legal education seminars, volunteered for legal organizations, and networked. Persistence paid off and I moved through the ranks of an articling student, associate, named partner, managing partner and then owner of my law firm.

Gender was irrelevant when I was out-billing my male associates year after year with a smile on my face — because as we all know, money talks.

Q2. Looking back to the unexpected pregnancy during your last year as a law student. How did that turn out to be a huge blessing in disguise?

As a young mom, I would take my son everywhere when I wasn't at work which forged an incredible bond between us. He knows exactly how to give an exceptional mani/pedi as a result of all those attendances at the nail salon where he would sit patiently watching and waiting. He has an incredible eye for fashion and high heels. He knows how to put a coat on a girl and knows to hold the door open. He also navigates his way around a kitchen better than most adults. I'm waiting for the day his future girlfriend or wife thanks me.

Being pregnant during my last semester of law school instilled immense fear about my career path and finances, in addition to the normal concerns, one has when pregnant with their first child.

It most certainly threw me off, but yes, in retrospect, it was a huge blessing in disguise. I needed to be financially stable for my son. I'm not sure if that would have happened without my little boy coming into my life when he did.

Q3. Despite your demanding career, what are the things you don't compromise on when it comes to your family?

I insist on my family having dinner together. If I have an evening meeting or a social event, it's almost always scheduled for 7:30 pm or later to ensure that I have time at the table to hear about exciting events that occurred at school and any upcoming activities that I need to mark down on my calendar. When I am recipe testing for my website, *JD in the Kitchen*, my kids participate by

giving me feedback and rating it out of 5 stars. Their comments often add a lot of giggles to our dinner table conversation.

**Q4. Woman are born multi-taskers. How do you take time out to be a lawyer, lifestyle blogger, and write a book while raising three kids?**

I start my day early by waking up at 6.15 am. I check my emails, schedule, social media and get out of the bed at 6.45 am. If I sleep past 6.30 am, my husband wakes me up by saying, with a smile: “Hey slacker, get up!” He knows I hate it when he calls me that, but it works every time.

I’m usually at the office at 7.30 am and the first thing I prepare is a “to-do list”, which I write it down using a pen and paper. I have a color-coded calendar which has everything on it including personal events. I was told in university that personal events should not be in one’s work calendar, which I disagree with at this stage of my life. If I’m at my daughter’s Spring concert, then my staff needs to know to not schedule anything at that time.

I avoid lunch meetings whenever possible. If I’m going out for a lunch meeting, then I’m killing at least 2 business hours that I will never get back. I do, however, believe that face time is important and meetings over a meal are a great opportunity to connect. I, therefore, request a dinner meeting instead and, yes, after 7.30 pm so I can see my kids.

**Q5. How challenging was it to write your first book, Law Girl’s Bump in the Road?**

*Law Girl's*  
BUMP  
*in the* ROAD  
leia london



Writing was the easy part; it was editing that proved to be a challenge. Years had passed since I originally wrote the journal chronicling my pregnancy. When I picked it up again, my writing style had changed so filling in the missing parts was difficult. I can't wait to start working on the second book and this time I won't wait for years before editing and publishing it.

