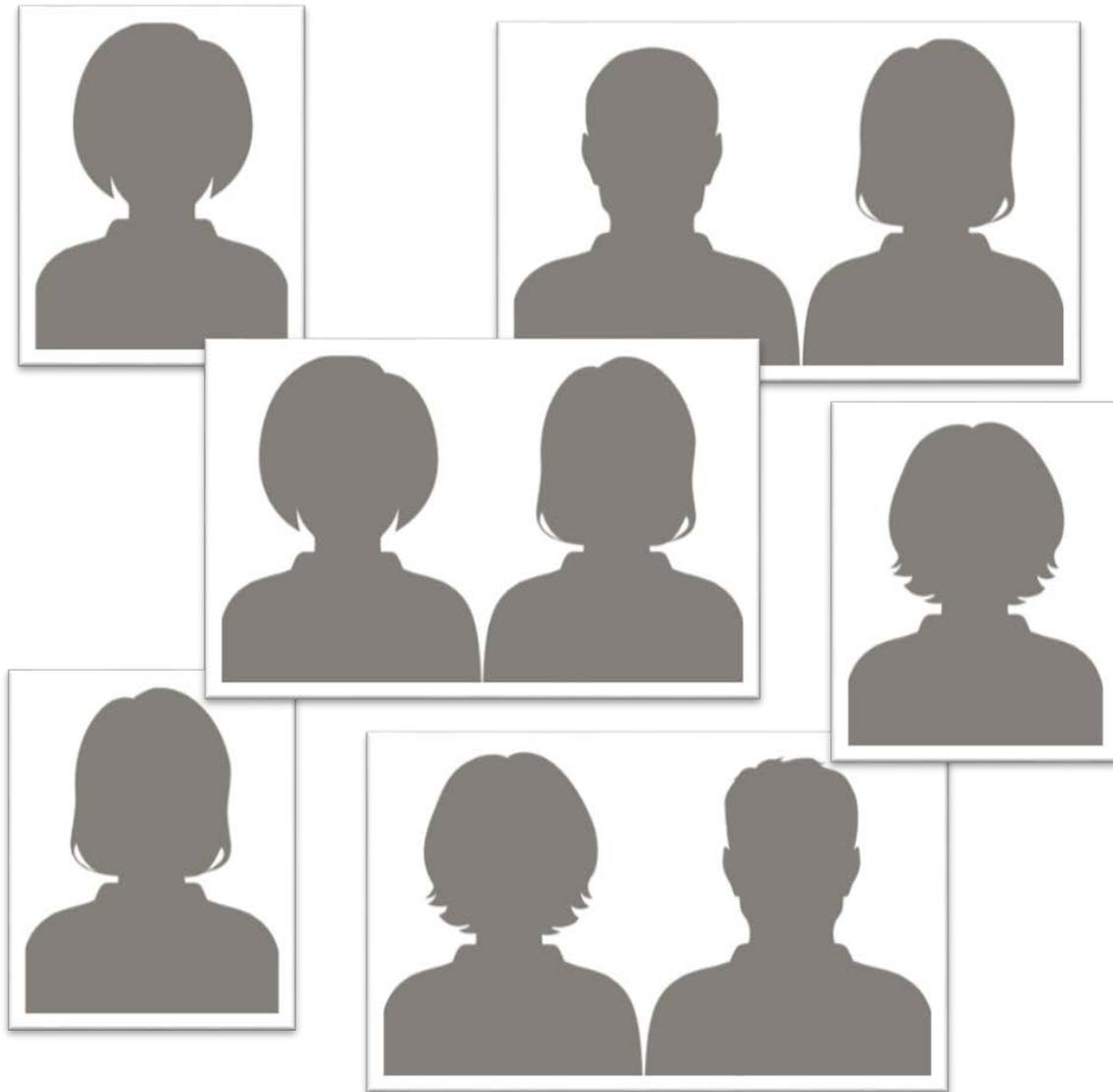


Equal Opportunities in researchers' everyday work



Individual paths for the reconciliation of private and working life

Foreword

Assuming responsibility at work and in private is a challenge that many employees face. On the one hand, they have obligations for children or dependent relatives, want to pursue hobbies or are restricted in their health. On the other hand, they want to get involved professionally, maybe even in a leadership position. The portrayed persons all have found an individual way to reconcile work and private life: some parents have found exceptional models for re-entry after parental leave or have agreed on that the father does most of the childcare. The portraits also show people who share a group management or a department management position or who have a leadership position in part-time.

All of the portrayed people are scientists working in Germany. The legal conditions for work and families vary from country to country. Because of that, specific conditions of the German law are explained in the footnote. The portraits are the result of the EU funded project JERRI – Joining Efforts for Responsible Research and Innovation. The interviews were conducted from November 2017 to April 2018 – the results are prepared as a snap-shot.

The portraits are designed to encourage those facing particular challenges in reconciling work and private life to be courageous and imaginative to find their personal best path, even if it is – at least so far – rather unusual.

Yours

Anne Spitzley and Michaela Friedrich

September 2018

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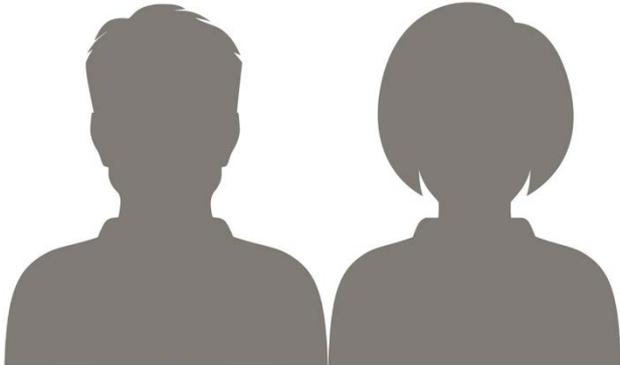
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»The most beautiful time is when the five of us are together. That beats everything.«



The portrayed scientists have been working in the same department of a research institute for 10 years. Both are research associates and deputy group leaders. Today married, they first met during their studies. Nineteen months ago, they became parents of triplets. They organize the everyday family life on an equal footing and split all tasks on equal shares.

»We split all tasks fifty-fifty.«

What were your first thoughts when you found out you were expecting triplets?

Female Scientist At first, I laughed so much. I am a triplet myself and my family had always prophesied this to me for fun. A little later, however, there was a moment where I was frightened. I knew that triplets were definitely born earlier. My mother already managed it and that was 30 years ago. Already at that time, everything went well and today the medicine is clearly more advanced. I was very happy from the beginning.

Male Scientist First, you don't really realize what it means to get three at once. I was very happy and thought "wow". I was not frightened because I did not think about the risks. In the course of the pregnancy, it became more and more real. The pregnancy was an exhausting time. My wife had many doctor's appointments due to the triplet pregnancy and was released from work very early while I was keeping on working normally.

What ideas and plans did you have to reconcile family and career?

Female Scientist I had hoped to have time for the children as well as for the work. I wanted to continue my work to an extent that would allow me to continue working as much as possible as before in terms of responsibilities and project tasks. On the other hand, the children should definitely not miss out.

Male Scientist I definitely wanted to reduce my working time to have time for the children.

How did you coordinate the reconciliation of family and career? Where you on the same page from the start?

Male Scientist That was quite uncomplicated. I wanted to take the father role and not a traditional division of roles. I would have also stayed at home for half a year, but we had no idea how the breastfeeding of three children would work and so we decided against it.

Female Scientist We agreed from the outset. If it had only been one child, we would have shared even more. Then I would have gone back to work in the first year and my husband would have also stayed home for a few months in the first year. We wanted to split this. It was always important to my husband that he could contribute a lot. To me, it was important that I am not only a mom but can also continue my work.

How did your supervisor and colleagues react to your plans?

Female Scientist Our superior was happy for and with us. To stay a year home as a mother is nowadays somehow standard and everyone is expecting it that way. That is why it was not a big surprise that I did that too. We have always tried to communicate early and transparently so that our supervisor could plan well.

Male Scientist We discussed our plans with our supervisor. He has a child himself and thus he fully sympathized with us. Our colleagues have also reacted well and glad. Nevertheless, we have also communicated that we will be available at all times.

Before you became parents, you both worked full time. How do you work today?

Female Scientist I was at home for a year on parental leave¹. After that, I started work again with 30 hours a week. At the same time, my husband has reduced his working hours to 30 hours per week for four months. After the four months, we both increased to 35 hours per week. For two months now, we have been doing this and testing to see if this works for us.

Male Scientist In the first month following the birth, the children were still in the hospital with my wife. Although I could not help so much, I still worked less to be able to be there. In the second and third month, I took parental leave and vacation and stayed at home.

How did you organize the care of the children?

Female Scientist Our limit was a third-party care at the earliest after one year and then at most 7.5 hours a day. We were able to realize that: the children are cared for in the daycare for 7.5 hours, 5 days a week. One of us leaves the house at 7 a.m. so he or she is at work at 8 a.m. The other one takes the children to the daycare and is at work at about 9 a.m. The one who started earlier will pick up the children at 3:15 p.m. We take turns every day – so that each has an afternoon with the children at home. For important meetings or business trips, we exchange the days.

In case of sickness, the one who would have had the shorter day anyway because he or she would have picked up the children stays at home. If one has an important appointment, then the other stays at home. If the children are sick for several days, we take turns.

For further support, we still have my mother-in-law. She is really worth a mint. She lives next door and helps every morning to get the children ready for the daycare. We get up at 6 o'clock and leave the house at 7:30 a.m. It's a challenge to prepare three children and two adults for the day and to have breakfast in 1.5

¹ In Germany employees are entitled to parental leave until the child or children turn three. Parental leave can be taken by the mother and father individually or jointly.

hours. Without the help of my mother-in-law, we would have to reduce our working hours.

Male Scientist And the great-grandma of the children is also there and helps every day. For example, she reads a book with one child while the other two are getting dressed. This is a highlight for the great-grandma and for the children as well. Sometimes the grandparents are also available as babysitters and take a day off for that. Then there is my sister still living with my parents next door. All family members can easily put the children to bed because the children know them all so well.

How do you organize the everyday family life?

Female Scientist We take turns in having the Friday off. We use the day for housekeeping, for shopping and for the precooking for the weekend.

Male Scientist By now, the free Friday is not so popular anymore because there is a lot to do that day. The one who has the day off is then also responsible for dropping and picking up the children. We communicate a lot for the everyday organization. Usually, we use the weekend to talk through the next week. In addition, we have a common calendar that helps immensely.

What does your working environment say about your working model?

Female Scientist The project partners and customers are mostly surprised that we are working so much or that we are already working again. There were no negative reactions.

Male Scientist Many people understand our situation because they also have children. We are also available at any time and sometimes take work home. The work is very important to us and our colleagues and customers know that.

How satisfied are you with how the reconciliation of work and family works for you?

Female Scientist I am pretty satisfied. So far, it works well with the 35 hours per week. Unfortunately, I recently had many business trips. I was gone about two to three times a month overnight and then had additional one-day trips. I am happy when I get home, but also when I leave for work.

Male Scientist The variety is valuable. I would not like to only work and come home at 7 p.m., but I would also not want to step back from work permanently and be responsible for the children alone. I have strongly reduced my business trips and only travel if it is necessary. Right now, it is more important for my wife to travel because of projects. If she is on a business trip, I will take and pick up the kids. However, the most beautiful time is when the five of us are together. That beats everything!

This is usually between 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. during the week, and then everyone is in a high spirit. Right now, I am very happy as it is, but I consider reducing my working time some more in the future.

Female Scientist Due to the more limited working hours, such things as a coffee with colleagues unfortunately cease. The time we have for the children we only focus on the children. We enjoy the time with the children consciously and when we work from home, then only when the children are in bed.

Who or what helps you the most to reconcile your work and private life and which benefits does your institute offer you for this reconciliation?

Female Scientist Three things are indispensable for us: First, the family support. Without this support, we would not be able to work to that extent. Second, the flexibility, the working time regulation, and that we can organize our work ourselves. Third that we both work at the same institute. I have heard from the experiences of acquaintances that in other companies they may not be so happy when fathers go on parental leave. Here, it was never an issue that my husband should not take parental leave.

Male Scientist It helps us a lot that we both work in the same group and have overlapping activities. So we know about each other's work. The uncomplicated arrangement with our common superiors also helps immensely. That simplifies to make our everyday work more flexible. It would all be much more complicated and would require so much more organization if we had different employers.

Which changes at your institute would allow you an even better reconciliation of private life and work?

Female Scientist At our institute, each of us has at most four days per month in flextime. It would be great if more such days a month were available, as other institutes of our research organization already have. That is whining at a high level. Moreover, it should become more normal to work from different places. The current culture of presence is often no longer necessary.

Male Scientist A kindergarten directly on campus would be great. Moreover, a shorter core working time² (currently 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) would be great because then you could also pick up the children as a full-time employee.

What advice would you give to other parents?

Female Scientist Follow your own wishes, ideas, and not those of society. Pay attention to you and the children, to your feeling as a family and not to the opinion of the neighbors.

Male Scientist Do not let the expectations of the environment influence you. We both saw the kindergarten as an opportunity. That is exactly what I would advise others. Our children like to go to the daycare and they are very well balanced by it. You should always listen to your own feelings. If you do not feel good, then you have to change something.

² The core working time or core period finds application in the working model of flextime. Here the core time is the period where the employees are required to be at work (e.g. between 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.). The employees are free to divide their other working hours flexible, while still achieving their daily and/ or weekly working hours.

»Instead of two bosses the employees now have two contact persons.«



The portrayed female scientist and the portrayed male scientist lead a department of their research institute jointly. The institute has several locations. The two portrayed scientists work at a location that is rural without connection to a university town.

The female scientist has a PhD and has been working for the institute for almost 10 years. She is married. The male scientist has a diploma and has been at the institute for almost 20 years. He is married and has two children in primary school age. His wife works part-time at the same institute.

»We share many tasks according to our strengths.«

Since when do you share the leadership position?

Male Scientist We have been managing the department together for almost a year. For me, the management task was not new, because I already led a laboratory of the institute with staff responsibility before.

Female Scientist For me, the leadership function was new. I was a research associate before that.

How did it come about that the two of you share the leadership position?

Male Scientist The entire institute is currently in a restructuring phase and the department management position should be filled. Our department has developed very well in the last few years and is with more than 30 colleagues one of the economically most powerful departments at this location of our institute. For this reason the idea arose to split the leadership of this large department. In addition, the requirements for the scientific character of our research organization increased. In order to continuously ensure the quality of the studies with industrial customers and to increase the scientific output the idea arose to split the management tasks according to the strengths of the two persons. I myself don't come from a university context and I rather see my focus on industrial projects. My colleague is more likely to focus on the scientific part. This is a very nice basic structure which started off well. In practice, it's still the case that both can work on each of these focuses.

Female Scientist For me, it was quite surprising that I was planned as a department manager. When our head of the institute suggested the idea of the tandem to me, I feared that it might have been decided without my colleague's knowledge. When he confirmed that this was a common idea of the two I saw it as a unique opportunity for me.

How do you organize the shared leadership in practice?

Female Scientist We share many tasks according to our strengths. We have also divided the participation at in-house committees so that we do not appear as double peaks there.

Male Scientist That was very important because some people were concerned that we would create an imbalance if, for example, we were both sitting on the steering committee of the department. Therefore, only one person takes part in such committees. Still, we are both equally well-informed and if one is absent, the other can represent him.

How did you determine who participates in which committee?

Female Scientist Our head of institute has determined that. We coordinate before the meetings and then inform each other afterward. We also ensure that the interests of the respective other are represented.

How do you put this into practice in everyday life: Do you sit together in an office? Do you have fixed dates for exchange?

Female Scientist We sit together in an office and talk directly to each other. There is no need to make appointments to exchange ideas.

Male Scientist We have fixed dates when it comes to completing the management tasks. Therefore, we have regular meetings with the other lab managers from the department and the laboratory technicians to discuss the current study occurrence.

Are your employees assigned to one of you?

Female Scientist Yes, they are.

Male Scientist There is no other way to handle this for 30 people. However, there are lab managers that wanted to have their performance review with both of us.

What does the shared leadership mean for your employees?

Female Scientist Especially for the lab managers, it was, of course, a transition, from one to two leaders. However, in the performance reviews we had, it was not regarded as negative. I rather think that instead of two bosses the employees now have two contact persons.

How did the leader colleagues react to the fact that there is now a dual leadership?

Male Scientist As already mentioned, there was the concern that we could create an imbalance by the dual leadership. But that didn't happen.

Female Scientist Another concern was that it leads to a financial burden on the institute because two departmental leaders are more expensive than one. But that was regulated accordingly.

How do your customers or project partners react?

Male Scientist In the classical industrial studies that we are doing here, there is usually a very clear assignment, because you designate a study management. Nevertheless, we got used to the habit that the respective other one is involved in the email traffic, or if necessary, participates in conference calls. Due to this, we are both on the same information level and can represent each other. Depending on the study, it is actually expected that there is always someone available who can provide information as quickly as possible. It was a great relief for me that I did not have to call anymore every two days when I am on vacation.

Did you have role models for the shared leadership model?

Female Scientist I don't even know about many dual leadership examples – actually only from politics.

Are you a role model for others?

Male Scientist That depends on the outcome of this interview (laughs). My colleague is often mentioned as an example when it comes to women in management positions. We are also a special research institute because women have a share of over 50 percent here.

Female Scientist We have many biological-technical assistants or chemical-technical assistants – these are very often women. There are fewer women at the top, but I think in our department it is well-balanced, for example, at the lab management level.

Which framework conditions of your institute contribute to the reconciliation of family and work?

Female Scientist For me, this was definitely the possibility of working from home. My husband also works in science and has been employed in another part of Germany for years. The fact that I had one day a week as a home office day, allowed me to better combine my private life with my work.

Male Scientist For me, it is the flextime. That way, I can stay home for a day to care for the children when it is necessary. A few years ago, the core working time³ was completely abolished at our site which further increases the flexibility.

How satisfied are you with how the reconciliation of work and family life works for you?

Female Scientist Currently, my standards are relatively low. I think, in general, we have good conditions.

³ The core working time or core period finds application in the working model of flextime. Here the core time is the period where the employees are required to be at work (e.g. between 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.). The employees are free to divide their other working hours flexible, while still achieving their daily and/ or weekly working hours.

Male Scientist To reconcile enough time for the family with my profession is definitely a challenge. We have two schoolchildren. It might sound trivial, but to ensure that the children are at the bus stop on time every morning is occasionally combined with stress. When you come home in the evening, you have to calm down as quickly as possible and try to use the limited time you have with the children as good as possible. Sometimes that works out well, sometimes worse.

Who or what helps you the most to reconcile work and private life?

Male Scientist With me, it is my and my wife's initiative. In addition, we have a full-day care for the children, which makes it possible for both of us to pursue a career. We try to support each other in the best possible way so that everyone has the freedom to attend their own interests. It doesn't work without balance.

Female Scientist I think it is important that we can react flexibly. For us as double department management, the consultation, of course, is extremely important. That works well. If one of us has to leave spontaneously, the other can take over the tasks of the day. Important for me personally is that I can free my mind at home and sometimes do something completely different. Otherwise, the work performance will eventually drop.

What are the biggest challenges for you in day-to-day work?

Female Scientist Regarding our laboratory, it is the current studies. There is always the pressure that everything has to run smoothly and that the high-quality requirements are met. New to me is the responsibility for the financing of the department. By this, an important task has been added. In addition, we have to come up with a new strategy for the further development of the department. Especially concerning the scientific character. There will be great challenges.

Male Scientist For a few years now, the institute has an external consultant. He asked us specifically these questions: What is your strategy? Where do you see yourselves in five years? This was new for both of us, not simple, but very exciting. Of course, the requirements of our research organization are also relevant: on the one hand, one has to acquire a lot of money to finance the department and on the other hand, one has to develop future topics, if possible with a flagship character.

Isn't it especially because of those things a big advantage that you are two?

Male Scientist That is definitely a relief.

Female Scientist Yes!

What advice would you give to other tandems?

Male Scientist In advance, one has to check if it's a match. The interpersonal factor is very important. You have to realize that you let go of some work and you have to admit that the other has strengths, which should then be used as well. If this works, the advantages of this kind of system are clearly prevalent.

Female Scientist Good communication and trust among each other are very important as well as transparency about responsibilities.

What could your organization change to facilitate shared leadership?

Female Scientist A great help would be financial support for innovative employment concepts. In the beginning, our biggest acceptance problem was the fear of the high costs. The existence of an initial funding would be good. There is an example in our organization: we have a program to promote women in science. This is implemented much better because the corresponding financial means exist.

Male Scientist Sustainability also starts with the staff. Reconciliation should also be lived, and not only presented outwardly. We may observe this especially when we want to recruit scientists. They have their demands on the reconciliation of work and private life. This can be met by trying more flexible options, especially in regions like ours that cannot be compared with metropolises. If we want to recruit scientists with a reputation, we often hear that we are too remote. They criticize the lack of infrastructure for scientific work in our region, e.g. the connection to a university. The cultural offer is less distinct than in the urban environment as well, and cheap housing is in fact not everything. I am sure that we would create better incentives with flexible working models.

Female Scientist Usually it is a big change to move here. For me personally, it wasn't because this is where I come from. For other scientific staff that is not from this region, it is a huge transition to adapt to country life. It's different for the technical staff. We have a very good vocational college, which is training the technical staff. These are mostly people from the region who are very well-trained and would like to stay here.

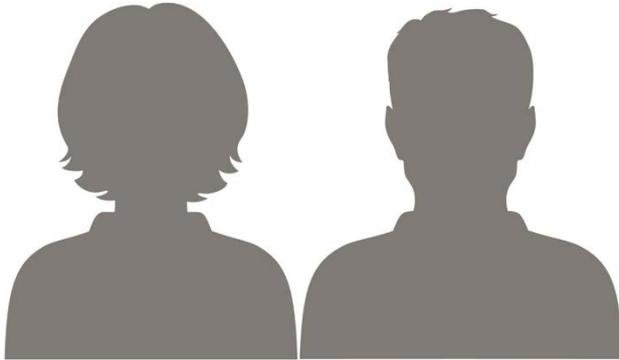
What do you wish for the future?

Female Scientist I wish to continuously have interesting research topics and a strategic development of the department. I also wish that the communication continues to stay as positive as before.

Male Scientist I see it the same way. Our external consultant has raised the question whether the department should be divided at some point. I do not see that as an option at all. I think with this construct we can get very far.

Female Scientist I think innovative concepts like shared leadership gain more and more importance in the future. This should be promoted because the reconciliation of private life and work, as well as a better work-life balance increase in significance.

»A Dad home alone with a baby is really recommendable.«



The portrayed scientists both work at the same research institute. They are married and have two daughters, which are in kindergarten and elementary school age. The female scientist has been at the institute for seven years. When she started working for the institute, her first daughter was five months old and because of that, her father cared for her until her first birthday. The male scientist has a PhD and has been working at the institute for two years.

»We are four happy people.«

Question to the Female Scientist: You started working at your institute shortly after the birth of your first daughter. How did it come about and how did you organize the care of your daughter?

Female Scientist Before our first child was born, I worked as a PhD student at a university. The change of my personal objective had several reasons. My professor at the time got a reputation in another city and my PhD topic was not quite right for me. Besides, I always wanted to have children as early as possible and found that I was actually already quite late then. For me, it was just the right moment for a child.

After the birth, I started to reorient professionally. When I read the job vacancy, I knew this place would fit perfectly with me. In the interview, I said at the very end that I am still on parental leave⁴ and have a five-month-old daughter. Already then, the plan was set that my husband would take over the further care of our daughter.

Male Scientist At this time, I also worked at the university. Originally, it was planned that I would go on parental leave from the sixth or seventh month of our daughter's life. Because of the job offer for my wife, I wanted to take parental leave in the short term from the fifth month. I explained the situation to my professor and it was not a problem for him. It was really easier than I thought. The project I worked on was extended in a cost-neutral manner. I stayed at home for six months and when our daughter was a year, I worked full time again.

Female Scientist At the beginning of my employment, I worked full time for four months and I was then able to take three months of parental leave again. It was really great that my group leader was so flexible. After that, I worked full time again.

⁴ In Germany employees are entitled to parental leave until the child or children turn three. Parental leave can be taken by the mother and father individually or jointly.

How did you split the care of your second daughter?

Male Scientist We made it a little different with our second daughter. My wife was 14 months at home and I stayed home two times each three months. At that time, I finished my dissertation and used the parental leave for that. During the first three months, I was still employed at the university. Immediately afterward I switched to a small consulting company. There I had another three months of parental leave later.

Female Scientist The dissertation is, so to speak, our third child (laughs). After the 14 months of parental leave, I worked for about four months 75 percent and then following full-time again. I discussed with my group leader how to plan my re-entry and he fully supported me. With flexibility and mutual agreement, we have always been able to find solutions that fit both my working group and me. If, for example, one of the children is sick and I have something important to work on at the same time, I can do it from home. At some point, I asked if I could get a laptop for it. From then on, the organization became even simpler and more flexible.

When they turned one year, the children came to the daycare center, which is close to the institute. One of us takes the children and the other picks them up. This way one can start early and the other can work longer.

Question to the Female Scientist: How did you manage the early reentry after the birth of your first daughter? Did you have role models?

Female Scientist For me, the early reentry was just right. With our second child, the 14 months of parental leave have been a bit long towards the end. I felt not challenged enough intellectually. When I was working at the university, my professor set an example for early re-entry. I never doubted that it could work.

Question to the Male Scientist: Were you concerned about going to parental time as a man?

Male Scientist No. Of course, it was an unfamiliar and new role for me, but I never had any concerns.

Female Scientist We would explicitly like to advertise it. A father home alone with a baby is highly recommended. After the first few weeks, my husband realized that he had really little time for the household. I think he could only experience this because he was home alone with the child. This helped our partnership and mutual appreciation tremendously.

Male Scientist For me, the sole parental leave was also important in view of the tighter relationship that I could build with my child. My skills in dealing with our child have been strengthened and I can act as an equal father – not only on parental leave but also in the future.

Question to the Male Scientist: How did you experience your parental leave?

Male Scientist That was a nice and much diversified time. I had no real idea what I would do in my parents' time before. I was able to read a lot during this time because the little girl slept a lot. We went for walks a lot. Of course, you always have to react spontaneously to the needs of such a small child. I also attended a parent-child course with my daughter. In the beginning, it was funny to be the only man,

especially because at the beginning the course was very adapted to the needs of mothers. I didn't know anything about that. However, when the children grew older and were able to move more, there were also other topics of discussion. That was fun. I also used my parents' time to think about my future: What do I do when I come back? How to proceed with the dissertation?

[Question to the Female Scientist: You were breastfeeding despite the fact that you went back to work. How did you organize this?](#)

Female Scientist In the beginning, I pumped milk for the next day at noon and in the afternoon. The German Maternity Protection Act grants any breastfeeding mother the right to breastfeed or to pump during the working hours. My daughter did not get baby food at the time I started working again. My husband introduced the baby food slowly when our daughter was big enough for it. By the baby food at noon, I reduced the breastfeeding or the pumping.

[What ideas and plans did you have to reconcile family and career when you learned that you are becoming a parent?](#)

Male Scientist For today's time we are relatively young parents, however, compared to our own parents we are late parents. It was clear to us that we approach career and family planning at the same time. So the four of us are constantly developing.

Female Scientist For me, it was never a question of whether children and career planning work together. I knew it would work. Perhaps this is also due to our own upbringing. Our parents have always worked both.

[How did you reconcile family and career? Did you agree from the start?](#)

Female Scientist Basically, we agreed. I actually wanted to have children even earlier. My husband said that I should work for at least a year. Looking back, that was right that way. If you want to reconcile child and work, then it is better to have some experience and an idea of how the working life is. From my own experience, I can say that I was able to enjoy the time as a mother more when I knew where I wanted to go.

[How did your colleagues react to how you reconcile family and work?](#)

Male Scientist That was quite diverse. Many young colleagues had not yet interest in starting a family. A few colleagues thought it is great that I took over the parental leave, others were skeptical. Since I was the only man in the parent-child course, I noticed that many mothers have reservations about a man alone taking care of his child.

Female Scientist People often asked, "How could you leave your child alone at five months?". I did not leave my child alone! It was with his father. I am in favor of equal rights for mother and father. It's nicer for the child and gives the woman more freedom for her own career. Unfortunately, however, there are also mothers who do not give the fathers any freedom and do not trust them with this task. That is sad.

Male Scientist Of course, there are also men who are only focused on their career and do not want to contribute so much to childcare. In addition, there are families in which the financial situation does not allow it. There is no general rule to that.

How do you organize the care of your children nowadays?

Female Scientist We continue to apply our rule "one brings the other picks up". Our oldest daughter is now in the first grade. That is why we currently have two contact points – school and kindergarten. That makes things a little more time-consuming. We want the children to be happy. We have great luck with our afternoon care. The elementary school and the afternoon care match perfectly and there are fixed caregivers. The afternoon care is great, we are hardly missed.

Male Scientist On the contrary, if we come too early to pick them up, that is not desired either. Our daughter is very happy to be there. If she wants to be picked up sooner, we'll get her. Then we continue work in the evening or the next day. The children should not feel that they must stay in the care facilities. The younger one is still in the full-day kindergarten and starts school next year. We do not exploit the care times completely. Not later than 5:30 p.m., we all want to be home together.

Can you rely on grandparents or friends in case of an emergency?

Female Scientist Not in acute cases, as the grandparents themselves are still working and they live in another city. However, on holidays, the children visit grandma and grandpa regularly.

Male Scientist When one of the children is sick, one of us stays at home⁵.

Female Scientist We will then come to an agreement for whom it just fits better. We actually often alternate daily. We always try to remain open and flexible for solutions. Luckily, we have this opportunity here at the institute. We ourselves are responsible for our work and when we do it.

How high is your travel activity and how do you organize the care then?

Female Scientist Who enters the calendar first is allowed to go (laughs). The other then takes care of the children alone. I am currently working on an EU project. This means that I have about three to five several-day business trips a year. In addition, there are a few business trips without overnight stays. That way it is within limits.

Male Scientist I currently have few business trips. This can change depending on the project situation.

How do you split the organization of the daily life?

Female Scientist In the household, we both do the same. However, we have support from a domestic help. My first boss advised me to do this. We are buying time this way. Without this support, we used the Saturday mainly for the household. The weekend is the free time we want to spend with our children. When the children get older, we have to, of course, make clear to them that it cannot be taken for granted that someone comes to clean.

⁵ According to the German law, each parent can take ten working days a year for the care of the sick child that is younger than 12 years. Lone-parents are entitled to 20 days. The number of sick days is doubled for two children. However, with more than two children there is an upper limit: This is 25 days per parent and 50 days for single parents.

How does your superior support you?

Female Scientist My direct manager gives me maximum freedom. He is quite composed and trusts me. I am responsible for my duties.

Male Scientist That is similar for me. Even when a child is sick, there is no discussion. If necessary, urgent things are done from home.

Which framework conditions of your institute contribute to the reconciliation of family and work?

Female Scientist An understanding boss and predictable tasks enable us to reconcile work and family life. The flextime is also very important. We have a relatively narrow core time⁶ of the day, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Most of the meetings take place in this period. We also use the parent-child office in the house regularly. The kids keep asking when we are going to do it again. Tomorrow, for example, the daycare is closed, so the little one comes along.

What does your working environment say about your working model? Do you get feedback?

Male Scientist I don't shout from the rooftops about my family and I do not have many conversations about my family. That is a normal thing for me.

Female Scientist With me, colleagues have always been seeking the conversation. I want to exemplify that family is fun and that one can solve everything with organization or flexibility.

How satisfied are you with how the reconciliation of work and family works for you?

Female Scientist I am very satisfied. One should just make courageous plans, seek the conversation with superiors, express ideas and usually a way is found. I think it's a pity that the home office is here rather seen negatively. I would like to work from home one day a week. Because of a multi-person office, I can work more quietly and more focused at home. For some tasks, I simply move forward faster that way. In addition, without the driving time, you can recharge your own battery despite work.

Who or what helps you the most to reconcile work and private life?

Male Scientist That we agree is what helps us the most. We talk and plan a lot with each other and compromise.

Female Scientist We are a great team.

⁶ The core working time or core period finds application in the working model of flextime. Here the core time is the period where the employees are required to be at work (e.g. between 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.). The employees are free to divide their other working hours flexible, while still achieving their daily and/ or weekly working hours.

What would you advise other parents?

Male Scientist Dare, seek a supportive environment and achieve your goals.

Female Scientist Do not have too many doubts, because there are always ways and means.

What would you do differently in retrospect?

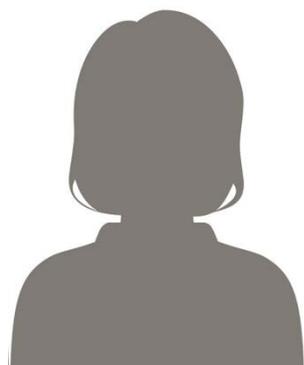
Female Scientist It would have been nice for our second daughter if my husband could also have stayed with her alone at home. Overall, we are four happy people and that is our goal.

What do you wish for the future?

Male Scientist I wish that it stays as it is and that the children do not notice the stress of daily life.

Female Scientist I agree with that! For our society, I wish that people would not brag about joint "journeys at parental leave", which are certainly great and strengthen the bond with the child. Superiors and colleagues would certainly be more positive about fathers at parental leave if they don't think it's about holidays, but if the father instead actually stays at home. In my opinion, the law should also be modified on this matter. Paid parental leave can stay – but only one at a time!

»There is nothing special about taking on a leadership function and working part-time.«



The portrayed female scientist has been working at her institute for almost 20 years. Almost a year after she took over the leadership of a group, her son was born. Her son is now four years old. The female scientist is still a group leader and works part-time to be able to spend time with her son.

»Do it first, then solve problems when they occur.«

How did it come about that you took over a leadership function?

Female Scientist The group management position became free. I have always been interested in a leadership function and then seized this opportunity and successfully applied for it.

Were you concerned when you took over the leadership function?

Female Scientist I had no fundamental concerns about not being able to cope with the leadership task, but I was looking forward to a new task with personnel management in my previous business field. I had the thought of a child, but this did not stop me from deciding to take over the leadership function. I thought I would find a solution. And that was good. In October, I took over the group management and in September of the following year my son was born.

After the birth of your son, you have taken parental leave⁷ and have been working part-time since. How many hours do you currently work?

Female Scientist I took two years of parental leave, of which I was completely home for the first five months. After that, I started working one day a week. After my son's first birthday, I increased to 24 hours and after the second birthday to 25 hours. Since I have always had so many overtime hours, I have increased to 28 hours after the third birthday. My full-time contract is currently resting and I have a temporary part-time contract.

I usually work five days a week. One of these days is a long working day. On this day I spend up to ten hours at the institute. On the other four days, I leave in the early afternoon to pick up my son from the daycare. However, I often work in the evenings when my son is in bed.

⁷ In Germany employees are entitled to parental leave until the child or children turn three. Parental leave can be taken by the mother and father individually or jointly.

What is special about a part-time leadership function?

Female Scientist I think there is nothing special about taking on a leadership function and working part-time. At least in my case – with a team of five employees – the part-time does not concern personnel management, but project work and related travel activities. Compared to my previous full-time job, I am more often present at the office and therefore more available – but only at certain times. Predictive planning is important here. In my view, part-time does not have any negative effects in terms of personnel management.

I see the challenge more in part-time as a concept: the difficulty in multi-day business trips, in afternoon/evening appointments and the skepticism of superiors and colleagues. That's something all those who work in part-time know whether leadership position or not.

What ideas and plans did you have for reconciling work and family when you learned that you were becoming a mother?

Female Scientist Spontaneously, I had no concrete plan, but it has evolved over time. I definitely wanted to be able to spend active time with my child. In addition, as expectant parents, we had the wish that both parents could work and that I could keep my leadership position.

How did your supervisor react to your plans?

Female Scientist My suggestion was accepted and my supervisor was glad about my early return. Full-time work would be welcome from the point of view of my supervisor. From my supervisor or my institute, there was no idea how to proceed when a manager is absent for a year.

How did your colleagues react?

Female Scientist I have not received any feedback from my leadership colleagues. There were uncertainty and ambiguity among my employees about what will happen and who to turn to in the future. It was therefore important to have a clear and fast communication about who will be responsible for the employees and that I am even reachable despite the child.

How did you organize the care of your child?

Female Scientist In the first year, my husband and I did not want to give our child into third-party care. My husband is an executive at a large company and actually wanted to continue working full time. However, since I wanted to start working one day a week five months after the birth, my husband took over the care for that day. He worked 30 hours part-time on parental leave for eight months. In addition, he had two months parental leave. If I had not had a leadership position, I would have probably stayed at home for a whole year.

Since our son is one year, he is in the daycare for six to seven hours a day. Usually, my husband takes him there four times and I take him there once a week. I pick him up four days a week and one day my husband picks him up. Only recently, we also have a babysitter who picks up our son from the daycare center once a month. Currently, the kids begin to go along with their friends and are then taken by their parents after the daycare. That way, one can support each other well. In case of longer illnesses or daycare-closing times, I also fall back on my parents who live far away or our son is there a few days for vacation.

How high is your travel activity and how do you organize the care of your child on business trips that last several days?

Female Scientist My travel activity is varying, but overall much less than before the birth of my son. Currently, I travel about three times a month. These are often one- to two-day trips. My husband plays a major role in the organization of my business trips, as he then takes care of bringing, picking up and caring for our son.

How well do you feel supported by your research organization or your working environment in reconciling family and work?

Female Scientist I feel supported quite good. However, the support is more acceptance rather than active support. Others do not change their way of working for me, but for scheduling my part-time is taking into account, if possible.

Good support is provided by the flexible work organization and flextime. At my institute, it is also possible to apply to work from home. However, I did not request this because my space situation at home does not meet the formal requirements. I would find it preferable if there were pragmatic rules for mobile working as in other companies.

I also found the seminar of my organization on reconciling work and family life helpful, because it shows different possibilities and above all promotes the exchange among each other. Based on the key questions, I could think twice about what is important to me.

What do your project partners and customers say about your working model?

Female Scientist So far, I have received rather positive feedback. Some project partners do not realize that I work part-time. Other project partners take a lot of consideration. But I have also heard people say that a mother belongs to her little child. That was expressed without the other knowing that it affected me either.

How satisfied are you with how the reconciliation of work and family life works for you?

Female Scientist I am satisfied, but there is still room for improvement. My "own" free time does not get its fair share. One challenge is the limited flexibility in business scheduling. I notice that especially with the scheduling in larger groups. I can rarely confirm immediately because I first have to coordinate with my husband. In the end, I renounce salary not to have so many professional commitments.

What are the biggest challenges for you in everyday life?

Female Scientist The biggest challenge is the unpredictable, such as illness, train cancellations or strikes. The strong accumulation of appointments or deadlines is also a challenge. In the past, I did a lot of overtime and was able to work without interruption. Today I have to stop in the afternoon and go on working in the evening from home.

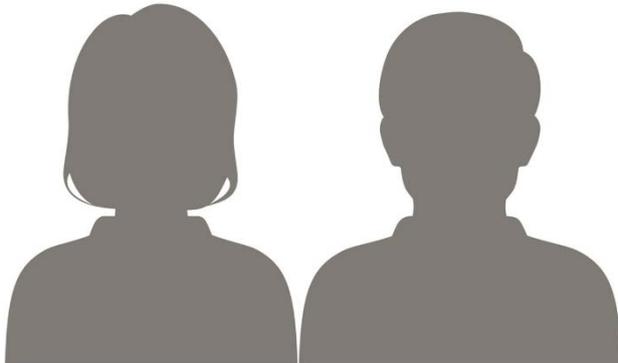
What advice do you give to other mothers and fathers?

Female Scientist Inform yourself about different work and care models. Find an individual model that suits you as a parent and your child. Reflect this model from time to time and adjust it if necessary. Overcome stereotypes and think more openly.

What do you wish for the future?

Female Scientist I wish to have a satisfactory job further on, more time for family and hobbies, and more flexibility. Good examples of part-time leadership would be helpful. In addition, I would like to have arrangements for mobile work. Especially desirable would be a daycare center with long opening hours, flexible care concepts – for example, the possibility to bring the child only at 11 o'clock – and enough places at affordable prices.

»I live in two completely different worlds right now: with my son in the morning and at work in the afternoon.«



The portrayed female scientist has been working at her research institute for 10 years. The portrayed male scientist has a doctorate and is a group leader at a university. Both are married and have a 14 months old son, whom they look after together.

»Role models were very important to me.«

When did you start working again after the birth and how many hours? How does your working model look currently?

Female Scientist We both worked full-time before our son was born. In the early days after the birth I did not work and my husband worked 30 hours. From the fifth to the seventh month of my son's life, my husband was at home on parental leave⁸. When our son was seven months old, I got back in with 15 hours a week and my husband took care of him on those two days.

Male Scientist Currently, we both work 25 hours a week for five days each. My wife starts at 7:30 a.m. in the morning. She comes home for lunch and then takes over the care. After lunch, I leave for work. Two days a week, I work longer in the evening. Otherwise, I would always just come home the time our son is going to bed. I would disturb him every time and he would not find rest. So far we have planned the first 1.5 years. We'll have to see how it goes afterward. Our son will probably be cared for by one of the baby minders of the institute where my wife works.

What ideas and plans did you have for reconciling work and family life when you learned that you were becoming parents?

Female Scientist According to the motto "we can handle it", we were problem-solving oriented. Maybe I have imagined it easier because of the role models that existed at the institute. These role models went back to work quickly after birth and they handled it well.

⁸ In Germany employees are entitled to parental leave until the child or children turn three. Parental leave can be taken by the mother and father individually or jointly.

Male Scientist It was clear to me from the start that my wife is not a woman who will stay home with the child for three years. We talked a lot about how we imagine the childcare and then we quickly were on the same page. I had colleagues who had reduced the working time for their children. For most, however, the woman has stayed home to look after the children.

How did your superiors respond to your plans?

Female Scientist My supervisor was very happy that I had a concrete plan and gladly agreed to it.

Male Scientist In my case the application for a reduction of hours is independent of the direct supervisor. Nevertheless, it makes sense to coordinate with the supervisor. I was pleasantly surprised that there was so little resistance to our rather unusual model.

How did your colleagues react?

Female Scientist My colleagues are relaxed regarding this.

Male Scientist My colleagues had to adjust a bit. In particular, they had to get used to the fact that I'm no longer there at all times.

How satisfied are you with your working model?

Male Scientist It was easier for me when I had the clear distinction between childcare and working days. At the moment, I live with my son in a completely different world in the mornings than in the afternoon at work. But the really big advantage is that I'm back at work every day and that way I also notice everything that happens.

How high is your travel activity?

Female Scientist I only had day trips so far. I am the Equal Opportunities Officer (EEO) at my institute. At the last meeting of the EEOs I thought about taking my son and my husband to take care of him. Eventually, it was too stressful for my son and I did not go there. We'll see how it goes with the next meeting.

Male Scientist Two weeks after the birth, I had to go on a business trip. And I am on longer business trips now and then. But I have aimed at reducing my trips and sometimes a colleague can take on a trip. Each of my business trips currently means that my wife has to take a vacation.

What role does your partner play in organizing everyday life?

Female Scientist We have a common calendar, in which we enter all appointments. In addition, we coordinate well.

Male Scientist We split the household. I cook lunch and my wife cleans up the kitchen afterward. Cooking with a child is sometimes quite a challenge.

Did you have concerns about working part-time as a man?

Male Scientist I had no concerns, but was curious to see how it practically works with the work process. I think concerns did not really arise because of the academic environment. That might be different if you work in a company and colleagues put pressure on you.

How did your environment react to your childcare model? Did you, as a caring father, struggle with prejudices?

Male Scientist Our parents have first stopped short... My parents had very traditional roles. My father worked and my mother took care of us children. Our parents were very interested in how this is done today. Just as they were interested in why we carry our child. In the toddler group, many were very surprised that we split the care and both work.

Did you have a role model? Are you a role model for others?

Female Scientist One female colleague was clearly a role model for me. In addition, we have friends, where the woman had the re-entry directly after maternity protection⁹. These role models were very important to me. That way I knew it was going to work and it could work with breastfeeding.

Male Scientist I had colleagues that reduced their working hours. That's why I knew that it was possible.

Female Scientist Friends often tell us that they think our model is great and that they would like to do it the same way. However, I have to clearly say that the basic framework conditions are just ideal for us. Our workplaces are very close from our home so that we can reach everything by bike quickly. The grandparents also live within a short distance. These have offered their help, but so far, we have not had to make use of that because of work-related reasons.

What is quite different than you imagined?

Male Scientist A lot is very different. I did not expect it to be so hard to master everyday life at home. My work also demands me, but in comparison, working for me is actually rather relaxing. I had heard from several colleagues before that they like to be at work because they simply have their rest for once. I could not understand that at the time, but now I understand them. It's not as if I'm not having fun with my son's care. I actually think it's very nice. Nevertheless, it is also very tiring.

And what I didn't take into consideration before is that you plan to do so much, set yourself goals, and then you get almost nothing done. I didn't know that side of me before and was getting really restless. This was especially the case in the two months of full-time parental leave. Many people told me before to not take on too much. So I only had small plans. Then also even the little things did not work out. I was disappointed. That was the biggest transition for me.

⁹ Maternity Leave, also sometimes referred to as Maternity protection (German: Mutterschutz) is a special protection for pregnant women and new mothers. It is a Mandatory time-off from work, six weeks before and eight weeks after childbirth (this jumps to 12 weeks if more than one baby is born).

How does your employer or your supervisor support you and how do your colleagues support you?

Female Scientist My superior supports me very well. He immediately accepted my plan for the re-entry and the working hours. Flexible working time models exist at my institute. You just need to know what you want and then show initiative and address the responsible people, because not all information is available on the intranet. By having three children, our female administration manager is also familiar with the problem of reconciliation in a leadership position. She is always willing to listen to concerns. Unlike originally planned, I wanted to work longer for only 15 hours to then increase to 25 hours a bit later. I decided this on short notice, but that was no problem at all. In addition, there are some helpful offers at our institute, such as a contract with two day-care parents, a vegetable purchasing service, a family service and a parent-child office. To have children and thus having different needs, for example in terms of working time, is considered normal at our institute.

Male Scientist We used the parent-child office¹⁰ a lot. When our son was still being breastfed, I always came here at lunchtime. Then the three of us had the lunch break together in the parent-child office.

What does your working environment say about your working model? Do you tell project partners or customers about your working model?

Female Scientist I just say that I work only in the morning because I'm working in part-time. That's the same thing with others. It may also happen that you have a conference call while watching the child. Then of course, people hear the child. This happened to my husband a few times now.

Male Scientist Most of the time he slept but sometimes he was awake. My project partners told me afterward at a meeting that they found it very funny. One of the project partners already has older children, he then remembered earlier days. Overall, the reactions are positive. If it is organizationally important that the project partners know about my child, for example because of my working time, then I say it, but otherwise not. I am not aware of a situation in which that was perceived negative.

How satisfied are you with how the reconciliation of work and family works for you?

Female Scientist It's certainly challenging, but you win something from both sides. You can enjoy the work and you can enjoy the time together with your child.

Male Scientist One cannot cherish the illusion that everything goes on as before. To me that was clear from the outset. Compared to others, we live in paradise with our working conditions and the opportunity to work part-time. I see that with other parents that I met through the crawler group. Many are surprised about our possibilities in terms of work design and acceptance.

¹⁰ A parent-child office is an office that enables work while also looking for children in case of sickness or other eventualities, e.g. they could be equipped with toys and a baby bed.

Female Scientist For others, already part-time was unimaginable, because the company did not accept it.

Male Scientist There is also short-term care at my university. I could leave our son there when I have a meeting. But this is not relevant for us. Our son needs a relatively long time until he gets used to other people, that's why we rather handle this differently. Nevertheless, the possibility exists and if required it is reassuring to know that there are such possibilities.

Who or what helps you the most to reconcile work and private life?

Female Scientist We both help each other. In addition, we are lucky that it also works so well logistically.

Male Scientist We have short commutes, otherwise, that would not work. Our part-time is the central element. Acquaintances of ours wanted a similar model as we did. Then the employer did not approve the part-time. The woman then stayed at home fully. This is very fragile. If one factor does not fit, it's very quickly back to the traditional roles, because this is organizationally the easiest.

What are the biggest challenges for you in everyday life?

Female Scientist The biggest challenge is that everything goes well at home – nothing spectacular.

Male Scientist The biggest challenge is that the daily life works well. We simply have to keep on through this care-intensive time, and then it will be more relaxed. The challenge is not to be overwhelmed in the long term. One often has the feeling to achieve nothing and is only busy making everyday life work. But, that's not true, you're still bringing up a child.

What advice do you give to other mothers and fathers?

Female Scientist There is so much more possible when it comes to reconciliation than you might think.

Male Scientist Do not have so many expectations. It will be very different from what you initially imagined. Of course, it is good to have a rough plan, but you should not be too set on this.

What would you do differently retrospectively?

Male Scientist I would probably not plan anything for the parental leave, but take things as they come.

Female Scientist It would have been nice if my husband had reduced his working time a little more in the beginning.

Male Scientist Right. Looking back, I could have been more courageous. Our idea was that I would reduce my working hours as much as possible in organizational terms. However, I didn't dare to concede more.

What do you wish for the future?

Female Scientist That everything stays as it is. That everyone stays healthy.

Male Scientist I hope that different ways of reconciling will become more natural in society. This does not mean that everyone has to work part-time. With friends of ours, the woman stayed three years at home and found this wonderful. But she had to fight with a lot of housewife prejudices.

Female Scientist A fellow student of mine who graduated shortly after me, 2009, has taken care of his children until now because his wife was self-employed. I wish for more flexibility in the models and in the heads.

What would help you to better reconcile your private and professional life?

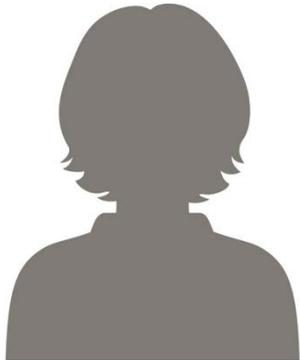
Female Scientist For us, the reconciliation absolutely works. The question is rather, how others can use it as well.

Male Scientist The question is also, whether others have the courage to use it. One side is that there are measures and the other side is that there are people to exemplify, how they can be used. I have the impression that we are quite exotic with our model.

What could your employer change to make it easier for you to reconcile private and professional life (even more)?

Female Scientist Because of the structure of my research organization with completely different institutes that is difficult to say. But based on our location, transparency could improve. I would like it to be well known to everyone what exists and what is possible. That's also what I like to work on in my position as the equal opportunity officer.

»Although we work so much, we spend a lot of beautiful time with our children.«



The portrayed female scientist has been working at her institute for more than 20 years. She began her career as a research assistant. For the last seven years, she has been working as a department manager. She recently became a professor at a university. In favor of this new task, she has given up the management of the department, but she continues to work for her research institute. She is married, has a son and a daughter with Down syndrome.

»We have been explicitly thinking about the reconciliation of family and work long before the family was founded.«

Have you already had children when you took a leadership position?

Female Scientist In the same year that I became a group leader, my son was born. Four years later, I became a department manager. My daughter was born another two years later. When I took over the position of the head of department, I already announced to my institute directors that I would like to have a second child.

What is special about a leadership role when you have children?

Female Scientist Before I had children, I could work when and especially as long as I wanted. As a mathematician, I tend to think big things through in one piece. Today, this is no longer working, because I often have to jump from task to task. This is not only due to the children, but also due to my department management function. Due to the children, I learned to discipline myself and to work more efficiently. Since the birth of the children, my days and weeks are tightly organized.

When after the birth of your children have you started working again?

Female Scientist I started working again after maternity protection¹¹ at both times. My husband and I shared the care of my son. There was no possibility of an external childcare at that time. I have therefore reduced to 30 hours per week for one year and my husband has reduced to about 60 percent. Each of us worked two whole days and one half day. We also split the nights. So the one who works the next day could sleep through.

¹¹ Maternity Leave, also sometimes referred to as Maternity protection (German: Mutterschutz) is a special German protection for pregnant women and new mothers. It is a Mandatory time-off from work, six weeks before and eight weeks after childbirth (this jumps to 12 weeks if more than one baby is born).

After the birth of my daughter, I went back in full time after maternity protection. I knew as a department manager I was working full-time anyway. Hence, it made no sense to reduce my working hours. The kindergarten of our son offered us to accept our daughter at four months already. This was an exciting experiment for us, but it proved to be very good. However, we also had a Plan B: if the care had not worked in the daycare, my husband would have drastically reduced his working hours.

Did you have any role models that have also re-entered immediately after birth?

Female Scientist At my institute, there were already colleagues before me who, after the birth of their children, quickly came back to work. That calmed me down because I saw that it could work. However, even without these role models, I would have get back to work right after maternity protection. Above all, these colleagues were helpful in terms of information on breastfeeding. They have advised me for the matter of pumping and storing of the milk. Breastfeeding was very important to me and that way I was able to breastfeed despite my work.

What is your husband's profession?

Female Scientist My husband is a vocational teacher and additionally the crisis intervention manager at his school. Now, my husband works 75 percent, which corresponds to a working time of about 38 hours – even more in crisis situations. During the holidays, he is almost completely free.

What ideas and plans did you have to reconcile family and career before you became parents?

Female Scientist We have been explicitly thinking about the reconciliation of family and work long before the family was founded. That was still quite abstract at the time, because we did not know what expect. I think it is important to look for the right man if you want to pursue a career as a woman and want to have children.

We have agreed that we will share the upbringing of the children and that I will have the career-oriented position. The financial aspect was not the crucial factor, even though I earn more. As a teacher, it was easier for my husband to reduce working hours than for me.

How did you organize the care of your children?

Female Scientist Our daughter goes to a full-day kindergarten. Most of the time, we will take her at about 8:00 a.m. and pick her up at 4:00 p.m. Sometimes we get her earlier, too. My daughter likes to go to kindergarten and everything works out very well. I worry about how it will be when my daughter starts school. There are far too few places available in schools that have experience with children with Down syndrome. Good secondary schools with many years of experience with children with Down syndrome exist, but with elementary schools, it looks bad. We expect that it is necessary to accompany the school beginning very intensively.

Our son went to an open all-day elementary school. There he ate lunch and was cared for until 4:30 p.m. Meanwhile, he is in 5th grade and an afternoon care is possible at this secondary school as well. However, if he does not want to stay there, he can go home. He is very independent and has his own key. After lunch, he does his homework on his own – no one has to sit next to him.

In the afternoon, my husband takes much time for our daughter and I spend one to two hours every evening with our son. This time belongs entirely to him, in this time we play, we read or I support him with the homework. Due to the flextime, I can go to a special sports group for children with Down syndrome with my daughter on Friday mornings. Although we work so much, we spend a lot of beautiful time with our children. Our children have more time with us than some of their friends with their parents.

My son sometimes has the impression that his sister gets more attention due to the Down syndrome. Unfortunately, one cannot prevent others from always asking for her first and not for our son.

How high is your travel activity?

Female Scientist In my worst year I had exactly 50 business trips: these lasted for different length – some only a few hours, others several days. Over the years, I have been able to reduce the number of days I travel. I pay attention to stay overnight as rarely as possible. For this, I get up very early and come back very late. When I travel, my husband takes over the dropping and picking up of our daughter. Then they already have to be at the kindergarten at 7:15 a.m., so that my husband is in school in time at 8 o'clock. It is not a pleasure to be on a business trip all the time, because the substantive work is left undone.

What role does your partner play in the organization of everyday life?

Female Scientist My husband plays a very important role. It is very important to him that his very significant part is seen and acknowledged. It happened to me in other interviews that it was neglected. That was very annoying to my husband and me. The situation was portrayed as if I were managing everything alone. We are, however, completely equal and split cooperatively.

Today, many men want to split cooperatively. These men, however, are faced with reservations – this often begins in their own family. Especially for the children it is a great advantage if they are cared for by several people and have early contact with other children.

We have optimized our domestic work. The household has to work as time-saving and more on the sidelines as possible. We both participate in domestic work, but my husband manages the bigger part.

Which particularities for the care, family and work arise from having a child with Down syndrome?

Female Scientist By having a child with Down syndrome, one gets to know Germany from another side. A side that I didn't know before. One is suddenly confronted with things that have not been thought about before: how does our society deal with people who are different? The answer is quite clear: they are discriminated. My daughter, for example, only gets a twin room in the hospital, while the same health insurance is paying a single room for other children. I think that is grotesque.

We parents have to ensure acceptance a lot. As a woman in the department management, I'm used to being tenacious, which was very helpful. The administrative dealing with authorities that you have to deal with is not my favorite occupation and it is an extra chunk of work.

You also learn how important networks are. These are important for all families, but especially for families with children with Down syndrome, it is not working without networks. You get answers to many of your questions there. I think it is a pity that there is no network of my research organization on disability. It would be nice if colleagues could exchange ideas that are either self-affected or have affected relatives.

What are the biggest challenges for you in everyday life?

Female Scientist For us as a family, the biggest challenge is when a child is sick. Then our system is knocked out and we have to improvise. I exceptionally work from home sometime or the grandparents help out. My organization offers a family service. We have not used that yet, because I could not imagine the care by a completely strange person so far. In addition, because my daughter understands everything, but mainly communicates with gestures and speaks only a few words – hence strangers often underestimate my daughter.

For my research organization, the biggest challenge is that we have to generate more and more money and at the same time become more and more expensive. I think the workload has also increased. Fixed-term contracts are a major issue in family planning, for men and women. I have had very interesting applicants who I did not get because I could only offer them a fixed-term contract.

Which framework conditions of your research organization contribute to the reconciliation of family and work?

Female Scientist The most important framework condition for me is the flexibility of working hours. A fixed model would not allow me time for important private appointments on the one hand and business trips on the other hand. But my flexibility is also based on the fact that my husband is very flexible.

The commitment of the institutes of my research organization to reconcile family and career varies a lot. At our campus, not so much happens; other institutes make much more for that matter. Overall, my organization should be much more innovative and pioneer with new models for the reconciliation. Who else could live innovative models, if not we?

What could your research organization change to facilitate the reconciliation of private and work life (even more)?

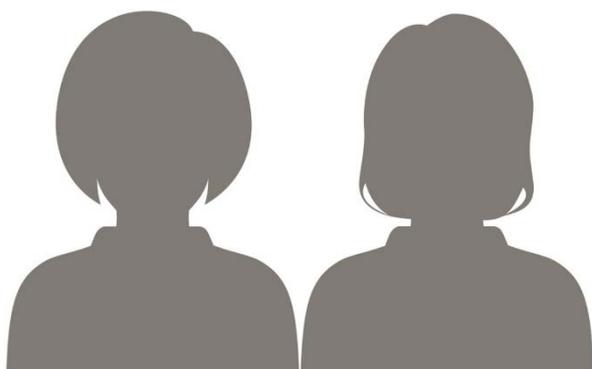
Female Scientist My organization should be honest with itself. Because how many employees with a fixed-term contract have children? I see the time limited terms of contracts as a major obstacle for family planning. I myself already had a contract of indefinite duration when I became a mother for the first time. Because of that, I had a very different scope of action than colleagues who only have a temporary contract.

I am glad that my research organization has taken up the issue of care-needy relatives. That's where it actually pioneered. The offer of the family service should be definitely made even more known. Since the care of relatives is a very important subject, which can be a mental burden.

What advice do you give to others who want to have children and pursue a career?

Female Scientist I advise everyone: Discuss very early with your partner – and far in advance of a pregnancy. Be aware of what you want and free yourself from conventions.

»If the executive agrees, then in terms of new working models everything is possible at our institute.«



The portrayed female scientist A and the portrayed female scientist B jointly lead a department. Both work part-time.

Female scientist A has a doctorate. She has been working at her research institute for almost 15 years. She is married and has a daughter and a son in primary school age.

Female scientist B started working as a research assistant for the research institute alongside her studies 8 years ago. She has been a research associate for 2 years.

»A tandem only works with good coordination and absolute confidence.«

Since when do you share the leadership position?

F. Scientist A Our department was restructured less than a year ago and new groups were formed within the department.

F. Scientist B Our former group leader was appointed the head of department, and we took over the group leadership of one of the new groups together.

How did you come to share the leadership position?

F. Scientist B The idea was that an experienced scientist trains a junior scientist and supports her in her career.

F. Scientist A The leadership role was new for both of us and there was another challenge: our new team was a mix of members from several formerly independent groups. In addition to that, we have retained our old responsibilities, scientific activities, and responsibilities.

F. Scientist B Already before we became group leaders, we both worked part-time – and we are still doing that now. A works 24 hours and I work 31 hours.

For what reasons do you work part-time?

F. Scientist A I work part-time because of my children. I totally disagree with the sentence "child and career" – either you take care of your children or you pursue a career. The term "reconciliation of family and work" is more suitable for me. I can only reconcile my family and my job because I have the fitting private infrastructure. On my two long working days and when I am on a business trip, my father picks up my children. They have lunch with him, and he takes care of the homework

and the afternoon appointments. My husband works full time. If we did not have the grandpa, my work would look very different.

F. Scientist B I had a long-distance relationship and spent only four days working to spend time together with my partner. Meanwhile, we have moved together and now I daily drive a very long distance to the institute. It is more convenient to drive four instead of five days.

Who had the idea for the shared leadership?

F. Scientist B The idea came from our former group leader and current head of department. Looking ahead to the future, the idea of training younger employees to become group leaders came up. Besides us, there is another leadership tandem in our department: it consists of two men.

F. Scientist A Maybe the idea also came about because it was not really my explicit goal to be a group leader. I have two children and I think it is important that I take care of my children. I was worried that a group leader position and my children would be irreconcilable.

F. Scientist B It has been under discussion for a while that I should be trained as a leader. Surprising to me was that this was suddenly going so fast.

F. Scientist A I was convinced that I would like to continue working part-time for a while. And through the shared leadership, I can at the same time pass on the experience that I gained by working there for a long-time.

How do you organize the shared leadership in practice?

F. Scientist A We share an office and make sure that it is occupied five days a week. I usually work here from Monday to Thursday. My colleague is here from Tuesday to Friday. When appointments are scheduled, she also sometimes comes in on Monday and I sometimes on Friday. We handle this flexible.

F. Scientist B Through the shared leadership, the question arose how we will conduct the performance review. In order not to sit there two against one, the employees had to be assigned to only one group leader. This assignment is in fact only valid for the performance review. Apart from that, we lead our five group members together.

How do you share your leadership responsibilities content-related?

F. Scientist A Until now, it was extremely important for us to become acquainted in everything together and constantly coordinate with each other. Meanwhile, it becomes apparent that *B* is the one that has the connection to the controlling. She juggles with numbers, vacation days, overtime and hour account assignments. She just has a knack for it.

F. Scientist B In return, *A* comes up with applications and all kinds of texts just like that.

F. Scientist A So we complement one another well. In addition, we perform tasks similarly and are both very structured.

How often do you coordinate with each other?

F. Scientist B We actually do it according to our needs. Basically, that is almost every day. We see each other three days a week. On Tuesday, we will discuss what happened on Monday and Friday. If there was something serious, we will send an email to inform the other directly.

F. Scientist A When we are at the office at the same time that works quickly – just like that. Lately we have phoned twice a day, and we did a short update via email. *B* was injured and therefore not allowed to drive. She worked from home and was in constant contact with me.

F. Scientist B It was ideal that *A* could just represent me. We also make mutual the vacation replacement, so that there is always a contact person available.

What does the shared leadership mean for your employees as well as for your colleagues?

F. Scientist B Our group is still quite young and we are still in the establishing phase. Our team members come from three different groups, with different themes and cultures. Now everyone has to find his or her new role and task.

F. Scientist A In addition, the old groups had completely different leaderships. We come from the same group and wanted to lead – with the best of intentions – the way that we were used to. In the beginning, it was difficult to find an own way for the group. This process is still ongoing.

F. Scientist B Other executives are interested. They consider our model to be an interesting idea. Especially because you have a reduced burden and there is always a replacement. Nevertheless, it is certain that everyone is curious about how it works. Therefore, we have to prove ourselves as a tandem.

Did you have role models for the shared leadership?

F. Scientist B At our institute, there have already been leadership-tandems for a long-time – one person is at this location and the other person is at the other location. At the end of last year, we received information about tandems in other companies. There was also an example where two women lead as a double tip. We got inspiration from them. For example, they have a shared email address.

F. Scientist A For two months now, we have a joint email address, in addition to our personal one. This address does not have a personal name, but a factual one. It's intended this way.

Are you a role model for others?

F. Scientist B I don't know if we are a role model for others. Perhaps this is changing through this portrait.

F. Scientist A We took part in a seminar "New in the leadership role". I was very surprised about the different management models that we have in our research organization. I believe that if the manager agrees, then actually everything is possible in our organization. Our head of department is ready to break new ground and try out

new models. However, this is also an advance in trust, which must be handled responsibly accordingly.

What is the basic requirement for a well-functioning tandem?

F. Scientist A A tandem only works with good coordination and absolute confidence. It is important to pursue the same line.

F. Scientist B I think trust, honesty and similar views are important. It is very helpful if you knew the tandem partner before.

What advantage do you see in the joint leadership?

F. Scientist B The truth is that we coordinated a lot with each other last year. That took a lot of time. Nevertheless, overall the benefits outweigh that. We optimally use the strengths that each of us has and thus work very efficiently.

F. Scientist A Another advantage is that you have a contact person on an equal footing. You can talk about things in a very quick and informal way and make decisions together. I think that is very helpful.

What would you do differently retrospectively?

F. Scientist B The period between the announcement of the restructuring and the actual implementation was quite short. If we had more time for settling in, the transition would have been smoother. We learned many things only when we were already group leaders.

F. Scientist A The change process could have had a bit more guidance, also from the outside, to cause less inefficiencies. The restructuring unsettled the staff...

F. Scientist B ... and at the same time, they were confronted with two group leaders, who also had to find themselves. That could have been easier.

What could your organization change to facilitate shared leadership?

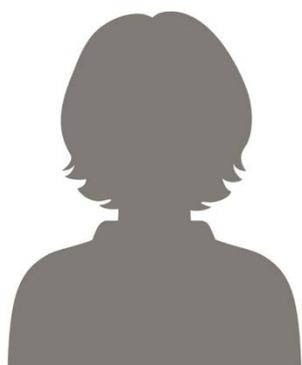
F. Scientist B I would endorse a general guideline for the division of employees between two executives – for example, with regard to employee talks. In our case, the works council has insisted on this and our head of department has therefore assigned our employees to one of the two of us. However, through the split our team first felt divided and not as a group.

What do you wish for the future?

F. Scientist A I hope that we can continue what we have begun and that we manage it good further on. We grow into our roles and we develop ourselves further. Our group is also getting together better every day. We are on a good path.

F. Scientist B I also wish that this goes on and that we find our way as a group.

»Special is that you have responsibility around the clock. At the office, you are responsible for the employees and at home, you are responsible for your child.«



The portrayed female scientist has been working at her institute for 10 years. After the birth of her daughter, the female scientist went for parental leave¹² for one year. Shortly after she returned to her old position, the management of a department was offered to her. She has been in charge of the department for one and a half years now and her daughter is three years old.

»Getting kids is a real adventure. You do not know what to expect.«

How did it come that you took over the department management?

Female Scientist When the head of department position was offered to me, I had just been back from parental leave for three weeks. I had not yet settled in properly, and I was just in the process of getting my daughter used to go to the daycare. Nevertheless, I decided to take over the position. Over the next seven months, there was a gradual transition. I worked in my old position while being taught the future leadership tasks. When my predecessor retired after these seven months, I took over the management of the department.

Did you have concerns when you took the leadership role?

Female Scientist Professionally, I was totally confident, I had no reservations on this matter. My concerns were more about how I manage to cope with the position while having reduced hours and less presence. Before I agreed, I spoke with my predecessor. He encouraged me and he was convinced that I was the right person for the job. So I said to myself, "this is a challenge – I accept it – what can possibly go wrong".

Before you became a mother, you worked full-time. How do you work today?

Female Scientist I took two years parental leave. The first year, I was completely at home. I started again with 26 hours and additionally had a teaching assignment at the university – so I had 29 to 30 hours per week. When I took the leadership position, I increased to 30 hours. Over time, I have increased my number of hours more and more. Meanwhile, I work 37.5 hours a week – that is 96 percent. On two fixed days a week, I work from home.

¹² In Germany employees are entitled to parental leave until the child or children turn three. Parental leave can be taken by the mother and father individually or jointly.

What ideas and plans did you have for reconciling work and family when you learned that you were becoming a mother?

Female Scientist I had planned to return from parental leave with 13 hours a week. When I calculated, I realized that it did not pay off financially. I did not actually make plans. I knew that I would stay home for a year and would care for everything else when the time comes.

I honestly did not think about the reconciliation of family and work. Probably because I never feared that there could be a problem. I am a member of the works council and I knew that some of my colleagues had already taken parental leave before I did and then returned to their current position.

And how did you coordinate with your husband on reconciling work and family life?

Female Scientist My husband is a teacher and there is almost no better job than this when it comes to reconciling work and family life. He usually works from home in the afternoon so it was clear to him that he would not reduce his working time. Of course, he has to prepare lessons in the afternoons, but he is flexible in terms of time with that. My husband takes care of the training of the trainee teachers and therefore does not have so many fixed dates. He can look after our daughter even with a full-time job. I could not work 7.5 hours a day if my husband was not as flexible and would not pick up our daughter regularly from the daycare. If my husband had a 9 to 5 job, it would be much harder to organize family life.

The fact that my husband did not reduce his working time was also a financial decision: the place where we live is expensive and you do not want to give up your gained standard of living. Since my husband as a civil servant doesn't have some social security contributions, he earns a lot more than me, because the net salary is higher.

How did your supervisor and colleagues react to your plans?

Female Scientist My superiors responded totally relaxed. Probably also because there are already other parents in the group. It was like a request program: I said I wanted to work for that amount of hours and he agreed.

The colleagues were happy that I was expecting. The offer of the leadership position, so shortly after my return, surprised some a bit. I think today they are quite happy with me. Noticeable was that especially female colleagues congratulated me. I think they were delighted that there was more femininity in the leadership.

What is special about a leadership function when you have a child?

Female Scientist What is special is that you have responsibility around the clock. At the office, you are responsible for the employees and at home, you are responsible for your child. You get up at 6 o'clock in the morning and have to be the boss at home because the child is in the defiance phase and does not want to get dressed. When you come to the office, you are also the boss and everyone wants something. In a leadership function, you have much more meetings and there is

less time for the work that stacks up on the desk. On some days I feel like I am on the run in the office and hence I really enjoy my home office days. Despite working from home then, I am always reachable. I use a tool for that with which I am reachable at home via the normal office extension.

How did you organize your child's care?

Female Scientist My daughter goes to an all-day childcare facility. The grandparents live a little farther away and cannot jump in spontaneously if something comes up. However, in the past two years, it has only happened two times that both my husband and I had urgent appointments when our daughter was sick. In case of a sickness, I take care of my daughter and work the best I can from home. I have made the experience that the world does not end down when I am not there for a few days.

Which framework conditions of your institute contribute to your reconciliation of family and work?

Female Scientist I work at an institute with a high proportion of part-time employees. There was always acceptance here for the fact that some people are more and some are less often at the institute. I can set up my working hours the way that suits me best, as long as I am so flexible that I still take part in important appointments. In fact, Monday is my home office day, but every two months a compulsory meeting takes place on Mondays, so I have to be at the institute then.

Our head of the institute understands the challenges of families. Currently, a parent-child office is supposed to be set up at the institute. It is not yet clear which room to choose or whether it will be a mobile solution.

At my institute, there is also a new works agreement for telework¹³. Until now, the home office was only possible for persons with children or relatives in need of care. This changed. In addition to the fixed teleworking at my institute, there is also occasional domestic work, if you have to stay at home for a day, because, for example, an artisan comes.

How satisfied are you with how the reconciliation of work and family works with you?

Female Scientist My institute has no influence on the things I am unhappy with. Like, for example, that the day only has 24 hours. It is a challenge to do justice to everyone. One is always torn between child and profession. However, I see that my daughter is doing well. In this respect, I do not have to have a bad conscience. Of course, it would be more relaxed if you could get the same money for less work. But I like to do my job and I would be miserable if I were only at home. After ten months of parental leave, I felt very bored. Nevertheless, if the financial pressure were not there, I would live more relaxed with only 50 percent of my working time.

¹³ Telework summarizes forms of work in which employees perform part of the work outside the employer's premises. One example is the home office, where the work takes place at home. Often the results of the work are transmitted to the employer via digital channels. The employer might have specific regulations for the telework. This type of work often enables more flexibility.

When the work is piling up at home and the child wants to be entertained, I say to myself: Housework can wait. I rather enjoy the time with my daughter.

What are the biggest challenges for you in everyday life?

Female Scientist For me, the biggest challenge is commuting. I need one and a half hours per way with public transport if it runs well. This had led me to buy a car. It makes me a bit more flexible and I can go shopping on my way home.

The childcare opening hours are another challenge. Through my long drive, it is difficult to pick up my daughter in time if my partner cannot do that exceptionally. Most of the time my daughter goes to daycare from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. I work 7.5 hours a day and have another three hours driving time.

What advice do you give to other parents?

Female Scientist Do not listen to advice! As a mother, it doesn't matter what you do, someone always finds it inappropriate. You're an uncaring mother because you are working. On the other hand, you neglect yourself because you are not working. No matter what you do, you cannot please everybody. That is why my advice is: Do your own thing. Nobody else is in your situation. For me, this model fits me and I wouldn't want it any other way.

Being parents is a process you have to grow into. You get a child and all of a sudden the world is a completely different one. The term love is completely re-defined. Feelings emerge that were previously unknown. One suddenly has responsibility and worries around the clock. You have to be flexible and listen to the inner voice.

What could your research organization change to make it (even more) possible for you to reconcile private and professional life?

Female Scientist So far, my research organization is a large authority, where some things work very slowly. I have heard from colleagues that it was relatively difficult to take sick days for children¹⁴. This should be simplified so that you do not have to wait months for the refund. Since as a result, parents do not take advantage of the children's sick days that they are entitled to.

I personally would have wished for more support and information on maternity protection¹⁵ and parental leave. It would have been helpful to have a checklist to know what my employer needs from me and what the health insurance company needs from my employer.

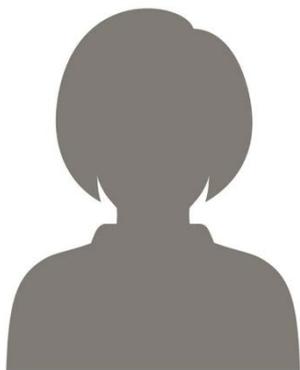
¹⁴ According to the German law, each parent can take ten working days a year for the care of the sick child that is younger than 12 years. Lone-parents are entitled to 20 days. The number of sick days is doubled for two children. However, with more than two children there is an upper limit: This is 25 days per parent and 50 days for single parents.

¹⁵ Maternity Leave, also sometimes referred to as Maternity protection (German: Mutterschutz) is a special German protection for pregnant women and new mothers. It is a Mandatory time-off from work, six weeks before and eight weeks after childbirth (this jumps to 12 weeks if more than one baby is born).

What would you do differently retrospectively?

Female Scientist I would have set up the nursery at least two months before the birth. My daughter was surprisingly born six weeks early. Except for a stroller and a baby seat, we did not have anything then. Getting children is the only unpredictability that you still have in life. Apart from that, you have a plan for everything. But getting kids is a real adventure. You do not know what to expect.

»We both didn't want the traditional family model.«



The portrayed female scientist started 10 years ago with a PhD scholarship at her institute. Six years ago, she was hired as a research associate. She has been deputy head of department for four years. Her husband works in the same department. Together they have a daughter in toddler age and a son in infancy. Currently, both work 40 percent to look after their son at home.

»The children always come first.«

Currently, you both work 40 percent. Did you do that after the birth of your daughter as well?

Female Scientist Yes. Before the children were born, my husband and I had full-time positions. For both our daughter and our son, we now use the ElterngeldPlus¹⁶ and really appreciate the opportunities that it offers. With both children, my husband and I have reduced to 40 percent after maternity protection. That means my husband and I are going to work alternately on a daily basis. After our daughter started with the daycare at the age of 14 months, we were both able to work full-time again. Because it worked very well the first time, we have been doing it the same way since the birth of our son. This time, however, we may also want to use the four partner months of the ElterngeldPlus, in which we will both work 25-30 hours per week. We then plan to both work 80 to 100 percent, when the small one is about 1.5 years old.

¹⁶ Parental allowance is a German state benefit for parents that are not in full-time work or not working at all. Parents who were not working before the birth can also receive the parental allowance. Parental allowance is paid for twelve months and is roughly two-thirds of the previous income. If mothers and fathers share the parental allowance, they together receive parental allowance for a maximum of 14 months. Each parent can draw a minimum of two and a maximum of twelve months' parental allowance.

For births from 1 July 2015 onwards, parental allowance is available in two variants: as a basic parental allowance which corresponds to the previous parental allowance arrangement, and as parental allowance "Plus" (ElterngeldPlus). Mothers and fathers can use the latter to combine drawing parental allowance and part-time work. Parents who return to work early on a part-time basis receive parental allowance for a longer period. ElterngeldPlus is calculated in the same way as the basic parental allowance, but is at most half the amount of parental allowance to which parents who have no part-time income would be entitled after the birth. Having said that, it is paid for twice as long: a basic parental allowance month = two parental allowance "Plus" months. If mothers and fathers both decide to work part-time simultaneously – for four months in parallel and between 25 to 30 hours per week – they will receive four additional ElterngeldPlus months each. Lone parents are entitled to the full 14 months' parental allowance and the partnership bonus. Parents can also receive parental allowance if they were not in employment prior to the birth.

How did you come to an agreement with your husband about the reconciliation of family and career?

Female Scientist We both did not want the "traditional model", where only the mother stays at home. However, I also did not want the "traditional inverted model", where only the father stays at home. We both wanted to have kids. We both wanted to be with the kids, and we both like to work. With our half-in-half split we have exactly what we wanted. Of course, the coordination effort for this split model is very large. Especially since we have two children we noticed that in particular. However, with children it is a bit chaotic in any case.

Luckily, through our job and the law, we have this freedom. I think it is very good that there are subsidies such as the Elterngeld in Germany, but I also find it very, very complicated. When calculating ElterngeldPlus/Elterngeld-Alternatives, I sometimes thought that you almost had to have a PhD to calculate the different possibilities.

How did your supervisor react to your plans?

Female Scientist My supervisor reacted warmly to the news of the offspring; also the second time, but there initially more cautious. I understand that because it means more coordination for all sides. All in all, he really reacted very well and was completely open to our working model.

To make a good collaboration possible, both my supervisor and I try to be flexible. If, for example, customer appointments are scheduled on my day off, I try to make that possible and comply with my employer. On the other hand, if necessary, I can sometimes pick up my daughter from the daycare center earlier, or even bring one child to the institute.

How did your employees react? How do they cope with your working model?

Female Scientist My employees have reacted very positively. I only got congratulations from them. They largely get along well with the working model. However, when my "institute days" are postponed by customer appointments, it is sometimes confusing for the employees. Part-time almost always requires more coordination.

Overall, many young parents take parental leave¹⁷, and there are many fathers who take more than the usual two months. Many handle it that way that each parent has half a year on parental leave. Our model with us both working in part-time directly after maternity leave¹⁸ is still relatively unusual.

How well is your leadership role compatible with working part-time?

Female Scientist As deputy head of department, I support the head of department, and I am something like a mediator between the head of department and the scientific staff. (The department consists of about 15 scientists and seven doctoral

¹⁷ In Germany employees are entitled to parental leave until the child or children turn three. Parental leave can be taken by the mother and father individually or jointly.

¹⁸ Maternity Leave, also sometimes referred to as Maternity protection (German: Mutterschutz) is a special German protection for pregnant women and new mothers. It is a Mandatory time-off from work, six weeks before and eight weeks after childbirth (this jumps to 12 weeks if more than one baby is born).

students). That means that I have to make strategic and organizational decisions, often in relation to the actual project process.

I think that works well with the part-time. Organizational things can be dealt with well by phone or by email. If I, for example, get a request from a customer on one of my days off, then I can also forward this to the right person from home or answer it quickly. But my place of work is at the institute. Conference calls, for example, I don't like to do from home, where I have to take care for the children at the same time.

How do your employees get along with you only working two days?

Female Scientist Especially the scientists are not constantly dependent on decisions of mine. They work independently on their projects. It is therefore rarely the case that decisions have to be made within one day, if that is the case, I check my emails twice a day on my days off and respond when something urgent arises.

What is special about a leadership function, if you have children?

Female Scientist Of course you have more professional responsibility in a leadership position and you cannot just sit back – but you don't do that anyway as a good employee. And one thing is probably clear, even if you are the boss of the world: when the child falls from the tree, then you leave everything and take care of your child.

How did you organize the care of your children?

Female Scientist Our daughter goes to a kindergarten and has a full-time place there. In our kindergarten this means that she can be looked after from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. We usually bring her at 8:30 a.m. and pick her up at 3:30 p.m. This is the normal framework for the kindergarten children. One thing is, how long the daycare is open, the other thing is, how long the other children are there. If everyone was picked up at 2 p.m., one would probably have a guilty conscience.

Our son is currently still at home and is being looked after alternately by my husband and me. That means that we often bring our daughter later to the daycare (currently as late as 9:30 a.m.).

For emergencies, we have my in-laws about 45 minutes away. For example, we fell back on them for the birth of our second child. We also have friends who could jump in. But that is rare because of the work. Our employer is flexible enough that we have always been able to resolve it. For example, in the case of our daughter's illness, when we still worked full-time before the birth of our son, we used the parent-child office at the institute or used home office. One or two times we used a children sick day¹⁹.

¹⁹ According to the German law, each parent can take ten working days a year for the care of the sick child that is younger than 12 years. Lone-parents are entitled to 20 days. The number of sick days is doubled for two children. However, with more than two children there is an upper limit: This is 25 days per parent and 50 days for single parents.

How high is your travel activity and how do you organize it?

Female Scientist Currently, I do not have many business trips. In the first six months after the birth of my son, I requested that I do not have to travel overnight. The first overnight business trip is now scheduled for next month. Overall, we try not to go on a business trip at the same time, so that there is always one there that can look after the children. We only had a joint business trip twice before and both times we were able to organize it with the opening hours of the childcare facility.

How do you share the organization of everyday life?

Female Scientist My husband and I are on the same page which makes it a lot easier. I do more of the organizational things, but in sum we both probably do the same.

Which conditions of your institute contribute to your reconciliation of family and work?

Female Scientist The existing part-time opportunities contribute to that enormously. I know people who work in companies where an 80 percent job is considered impossible.

What do your customers say about your working model?

Female Scientist I don't explain my working time model to every customer. It always depends on the intensity of the contact with the customer and how I assess the reaction. Of course, it is most pleasant if you can handle it openly. I have e.g. a customer who knows that I'm working part-time for child care. I told him he could call me anytime and if it is not a good moment, I would just reach back later. This works well, also because he has small children himself. However, there are certainly customers that react tensely to child noise in the background. In that case, I try to avoid that.

How satisfied are you with how the reconciliation of work and family life works for you?

Female Scientist I am satisfied. It's exhausting, but that it would probably also be without a job. Appointments on child care days are exhausting, but in this case it is clearly an advantage that my husband and I work in the same department. We then bring the little one to work with us and the other then takes care in the office.

What advice do you give to other parents?

Female Scientist Coordinate with your partner, talk about what you want and see what suits both. Do not think too conservative. You get a lot done if you just try it.

What would help you to be able to reconcile your private and professional life even better?

Female Scientist Germany could become even more flexible. I have a friend in Sweden. I learned from her that in Germany, in contrast to Sweden, there are still relatively fixed working hours and a lot of core working time²⁰.

I think it would be good if more people bring their children to work. This makes more visible that children are a factor that matters. It should not have to be hidden that you also take care of your children.

²⁰ The core working time or core period finds application in the working model of flextime. Here the core time is the period where the employees are required to be at work (e.g. between 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.). The employees are free to divide their other working hours flexible, while still achieving their daily and/ or weekly working hours.



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