

Lily- Struggling to balance the responsibilities of work and family

“that’s the thing, as a woman you have to show you are capable and be able to prove your commitment more than the men do”

Lily’s story

I am a professional woman working full time in a traditionally male workplace. I love my work and want to advance my career. My workplace has flexible arrangements which I am able to take advantage of to balance my career and family responsibilities.

I have a partner and three children who are growing up through primary and secondary school. We have a busy life with work, school, after school and family commitments.

Attitudes and Behaviours

My work is very important to me. I worked hard to obtain my qualifications and have enjoyed developing my career. I get a great deal of satisfaction from performing my job well, and being respected for what I achieve.

Likewise my family is the centre of my world and the wellbeing of my partner and children is hugely important to me.

I want to be as involved as possible in the day to day lives of my children but it’s a challenge for me to balance doing this well, while being the best I can be at work too. I need to be able to take my kids to the doctor when they are unwell, and be at school events such as sports days and mother’s day events. I feel that I’m taking on more of the parental responsibilities of the family than my husband, and often it falls to me to take time off work when the children are unwell, or there are appointments during work time. I find it stressful juggling home and work responsibilities as sometimes priorities conflict, and I am pulled in many directions at once, making me feel inadequate and frustrated. This stems from the perception in our workplaces that using flexible arrangements is a weakness, and portrays those that use them as being uncommitted to their work.

Needs & Expectations

I want to feel encouraged and guilt free when I use the flexible arrangements in my workplace. We have good workplace policies around flexibility, but it seems as though it is only the women who use them. There’s a perception in my workplace that if you are committed to getting ahead, family responsibilities need to take second place. I need the men in our workplace to use these arrangements to normalise them and encourage their use. I’d also like my husband to make use of the flexible arrangements in his workplace so we are sharing these responsibilities between us more.

I need everyone to be open about the challenges of parenting and working, and I don’t want parental responsibilities to be seen as a women’s issue.

