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Family: Lessons from the (Kitchen) Bench – RBG as Wife and Mother

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Ever-present in Ruth Bader Ginsburg's discussions of her professional and personal growth were her husband, Marty, and their children. As wives and mothers in two different places in our careers, we reflect on her lessons of the importance of a strong support system.

Partnership is essential: *"I had a life partner who thought my work was as important as his, and I think that made all the difference for me."* – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Justice Ginsburg's love story with her husband Marty was almost as famous as her ability to do more pushups than we can. She credited much of her career advancement to his unwavering support, all the way to the Supreme Court.

The idea of partnership looks different depending on our family compositions or stages in life – maybe your partner is a spouse, maybe she is a close friend who hears your stories at the end of the day. Justice Ginsburg's relationship with Marty teaches us to keep close those who give us the motivation to find our passion and the space to pursue it.

Share the load: *"Women will have achieved true equality when men share with them the responsibility of bringing up the next generation."* – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Justice Ginsburg and Marty learned to give and take as the other needed it, especially when it came to raising their family. When Marty was diagnosed with cancer during his final year of law school, Ruth helped with his coursework, handled her own coursework, and cared for their three-year-old. Marty took the lead in the couple's domestic life when Ruth established the ACLU Women's Rights Project. And when their son got into trouble at school, Ruth's response to the headmaster was, "This child has two parents. Please alternate calls. It's his father's turn."

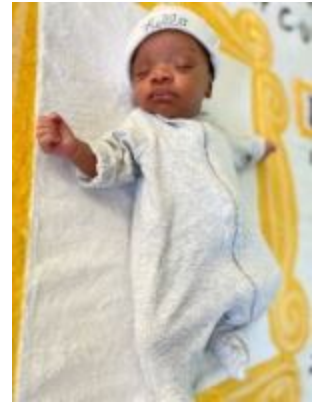
Now more than ever – as news outlets report that "Working Moms Are Reaching the Breaking Point During the Pandemic" – it's encouraging to be reminded that Justice Ginsburg's household was one of equals. "Having it all" means sharing it all (we're looking at you, laundry).

Perspective is key: *"I attribute my success in law school largely to [my daughter,] Jane...Having Jane gave me a better sense of what life is."* – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

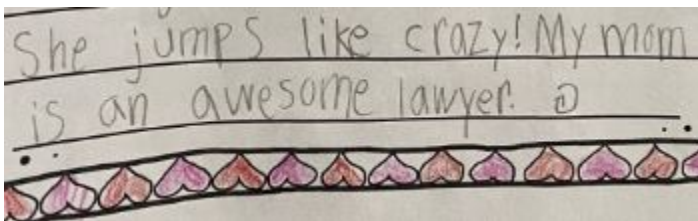
Justice Ginsburg emphasized the importance of taking a break from each sphere in her life so that she could return to it with renewed vigor: in law school, her time with her daughter allowed her to recharge for her next round of studying.

She reminds us that investing in our relationships and communities is a necessary reprieve that fosters creativity and our sense of purpose.

Tenia's Takeaways: As a young lawyer just entering the field, I am empowered by the tenacity that Justice Ginsburg exhibited. Jane was only 14-months-old when Justice Ginsburg started law school, and that couldn't have been easy. I was pregnant with my son my entire last semester of law school, and it was difficult but so rewarding. My husband understood the nights where I was too tired to make dinner and listened intently as I ranted about case facts in detail. He appreciated my added drive and did whatever he could to make sure I finished strong. I want both of us to be a role model for our son, and we can't do that unless we support each other. The stakes seem so much higher to me now that I'm a parent, but I feel up for the challenge thanks to Justice Ginsburg and all the other successful mommy lawyers at Baker that I look up to.



Caldwell's Takeaways: Justice Ginsburg's insistence that she was a success in a male-dominated field *because* of her family, not in spite of it, resonates with and inspires me. My husband believes I'm the best lawyer on the planet (bless him). He acts as my sounding board and mock jury, and I edit all of his speeches. He makes a mean PB&J and understands the importance – for our children as well as our careers – of being an equal partner. And speaking of those two kids, they make my hard days easier and remind me that what is important in life is what is simple. Last week, I got to see my daughter's presentation about her family for school. After listing her favorite activities and facts about our dog, she slipped this in:



That's all the boost I need to wake up excited to hit the courtroom, and it will be my greatest joy to watch her, like RBG, "fight for the things [she cares] about." Because let's be honest: a big win at work doesn't feel official until I've called my mother.

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