

Best Foot Forward

Balancing work and family life is all about diarising for this busy podiatrist.

BY KATE FARR

For British-born ALEXANDRA DUFF, the day begins at an eye-rubbing 5.30am. “Imogen, my six-year-old, has to be on the school bus by 6.55am, so I have to be up and ready to go before she is. We have our morning routine pretty sorted but it would not run smoothly if it weren’t for my helper Emeros.”

With her 21-year-old stepdaughter Alison currently at university in the US, and husband Andrew also working long hours, Alexandra swears by putting *everything* in her diary. She says, “It’s very boring, but life has to have a schedule, so for me everything is diarised. Emeros and I work as a team, and we have a joint household diary that we work from.” She continues, “I then also run a separate diary with my husband – our friends think this is hilarious as we even have diary meetings!” The last piece of the puzzle is menu planning, which happens weekly on a Sunday.

Once Imogen is off to school, Alexandra heads from her Clearwater Bay home to the medical clinic on Duddell Street in Central where she works part-time. As a podiatrist, her day often begins at around 8am; something that she feels facilitates a healthy work-life balance.

When I ask how she first became interested in podiatry, Alexandra doesn’t hesitate. “I always knew I was going to go into medicine – I announced at the age of four that I was going to be a doctor and it never changed!” She continues, “As a dyslexic, I knew that I was going to struggle with the academic side of training to be a doctor as it takes me longer to do written work than my non-dyslexic peers. Podiatry appealed as it allowed me to do all the things a ‘doctor’ can do, but focused within one aspect of the body.”

So, what exactly *does* a podiatrist do? Alexandra explains: “Podiatry is an allied health profession; we are not medical doctors in the true sense of the word, but specialists in the foot and lower limb. Think of us like dentists ... we do everything to do with that part of the body!”



Alexandra’s appointments run throughout day, and she aims to pack as much into her working week as possible. “At the beginning of the week, I have a 3pm dash back to Clearwater Bay to facilitate after-school activities and homework, and so I try and work out while my daughter is busy. On Thursdays and Fridays, I work in the clinic until 7pm, and then finish off any paperwork.” Her packed schedule necessitates early nights, with Alexandra admitting, “I’m normally asleep by 9.30pm as I just can’t function after 9pm.”

And what does this busy medical mum do in her downtime? “I play hockey for Hong Kong Vets, and I also paddle dragon boats for Smugz, plus kickboxing and running. Exercise is my time and it keeps me sane!” *E*

James Morley