

The Importance of Support

BY REBECCA SIMPSON

A British GP shares why support networks are essential for women in business.

Dr Lily Wong owns a thriving medical practice in the heart of Central, has two teenage boys who meditate and a husband who is not only a pharmacist but a loving hands-on dad, plus she drinks smoothies and hits CrossFit several times a week.

Yes, she's the woman who "has it all"; yet she's far from intimidating – in fact, Dr Lily is warm and pragmatic about her impressive life. The secret to her success? Being organised, focused, realistic and well supported both professionally and personally; "I have support at home and at work – it's the only reason I can do this," she shares.

Family sits at the centre of Dr Lily's accomplishments. As one of five children, she grew up in England working alongside her parents who built a chain of restaurants. "The bottom line is, my parents have been, and continue to be, one of the biggest influences in my career."

Fast forward a few decades and all her siblings are back in Hong Kong, each with a business of their own. Before becoming a doctor, Lily started off a pharmacist, which is how she met her husband. In 2011, Dr Lily established a practice alongside her brother and sister, with her husband playing the role of pharmacist.

What lured her to Hong Kong? Connection with family and a chance for her children to master Chinese language played a crucial role in the decision. Most importantly, Hong Kong presented the opportunity to be both a full-time doctor and a mum of small children. "In London, I watched my friends either go part-time, give up or leave. I knew I couldn't be a full-time GP and look after two children and do the school run if we stayed. I didn't want to give up my career; it took me so long to get here and I studied so hard."

The relocation was a success; today, Dr Lily is a successful business woman who has raised two teenage boys with a social conscience – they willingly volunteer at a food shelter! Beyond a strong support network, she recommends parents embrace a strong routine that involves dedicated time with kids as a must. "I've always had breakfast with my sons and walked them down to the bus – that 45 minutes is very important for bonding, it really helps our relationship."

As the boys have grown older, she's also facilitated personal time by treating them with meals and mini-breaks alone. In high school, she alternates each child to board during the week so evenings are spent one-on-one with one son at a time.

"That one-to-one time is very important. When I had my second child, I thought, I have to change my routine here," she shares.

What's her parting advice to other busy career women? "Children are your biggest investment. If you get it right, they are your pension. If you get it wrong, they'll use it all." *E*

