

Insights, News & Events

## FINDING GLITTER AMID THE GLOOM: THE PANDEMIC'S UNEXPECTED GIFTS FOR A BIG LAW MOTHER

The adversity of a difficult year brought some lasting benefits for Fisher Phillips' Emily N. Litzinger.

Publication  
Jan 5, 2021

Don't get me wrong, the last 10 months have been some of the most trying times of my life. My husband and I, both at pivotal points in our careers, have been abruptly isolated at home with our three young daughters for what feels like an eternity. Managing virtual school for my 7-year-old and trying to keep my 4- and 2-year-olds entertained has pushed us to our limits—in our careers, our marriage and our parenting practices. But as the year came to an end, and the rollout of vaccines brought hope, I found myself reflecting on the gifts this adversity have given me.

### Flexibility

As a litigator for a large defense firm, I've had to push the boundaries to strike a balance between my career, business development and growing, birthing and raising three daughters. Though my firm has been accommodating to my requests to reduce my schedule or time off to care for a sick child, this is not the societal norm, and it often it is met with unconscious bias. This problem is not unique to law firms, as it is prolific throughout the U.S. workforce.

Before the pandemic, I had accepted the risks with setting those boundaries and moved forward with my life and career on my own terms. But with the pandemic closing the doors of the office, schools and daycares alike, flexibility has become a norm. This is an adjustment that has been made by necessity, and I am grateful for it. Yes, I'd much rather

### Related People



**Emily N. Litzinger**

Partner

502.561.3978

have my kids in school or child care. Time away from each other is much needed. But being able to play outside with them in between meetings is pretty amazing in its own right. This flexibility comes with its own costs (like staying up late to catch up on work), but for me, being able to take guilt-free time during the day to put my 2-year-old down for a nap is something I will never regret doing. If anything, the last 10 months have taught me to slow down and release the burden of guilt.

## **Autonomy**

This one feels good. The law firm structure is very hierarchical, with partners assigning work to associates. Over the last few years, I've built my own book of business and developed nearly enough work to keep myself busy. This is a great feeling, but it's also scary. Pre-pandemic I'd often run things by my managing partner—just to get his blessing on my approach to a matter. Nine times out of 10, it was exactly what he'd do. But the reassurance gave me comfort.

Fast-forward to working remotely all the time, and at all hours of the day and night. You can't always get that comfort, and you are forced to trust your judgment and experience and move forward. That decisiveness has fueled my autonomy, which has in turn contributed to the growth of my client base. I have been forced out of the nest so to speak, and I am happy about how I've landed on my feet and started to build my own nest.

## **More Friends**

I know what you are thinking: All this social distancing, working remotely and well, purposefully, avoiding people—how could you have developed more friends? It's funny, being forced out of the nest has allowed me to grow my network of internal, referral and industry resources through social media and other networking opportunities. These are opportunities that before the pandemic would have come in the form of a cocktail hour or traveling to visit a client, something that would have burdened my family and work-life balance.

But because the new norm of virtual networking is accessible to everyone, it has leveled the playing field for me. I've worked hard to throw myself into reading, creating

and distributing content and building my network outside of the four walls of my office.

I know my situation is very privileged. I do not purport to think that I have struggled more than the next person. But it's been hard for me. It's been hard for you. After a year of unanticipated change, I have found gratitude for my unexpected gifts.

***Reprinted with permission from the January 5, 2021 edition of The American Lawyer © 2021 ALM Media Properties, LLC. All rights reserved.***

***Further duplication without permission is prohibited, contact 877-257-3382 or [reprints@alm.com](mailto:reprints@alm.com).***