

Having It All with Dr. Beatriz H. Porras, Medical Director of Skin Diagnostics, Inc.

By Katie Hall
Cincinnati Woman Magazine

May is the month when we celebrate mothers. In generations past, the role of mother was more clearly defined: a woman who serves and supports her family. Now a woman is presented with almost endless choices: motherhood or not, career or family, career and family. And all choices come with sacrifices. We raise our girls to believe they can have it all, but how well do we teach them the details; like who does the laundry, who pays the bills, and what if your child is sick?

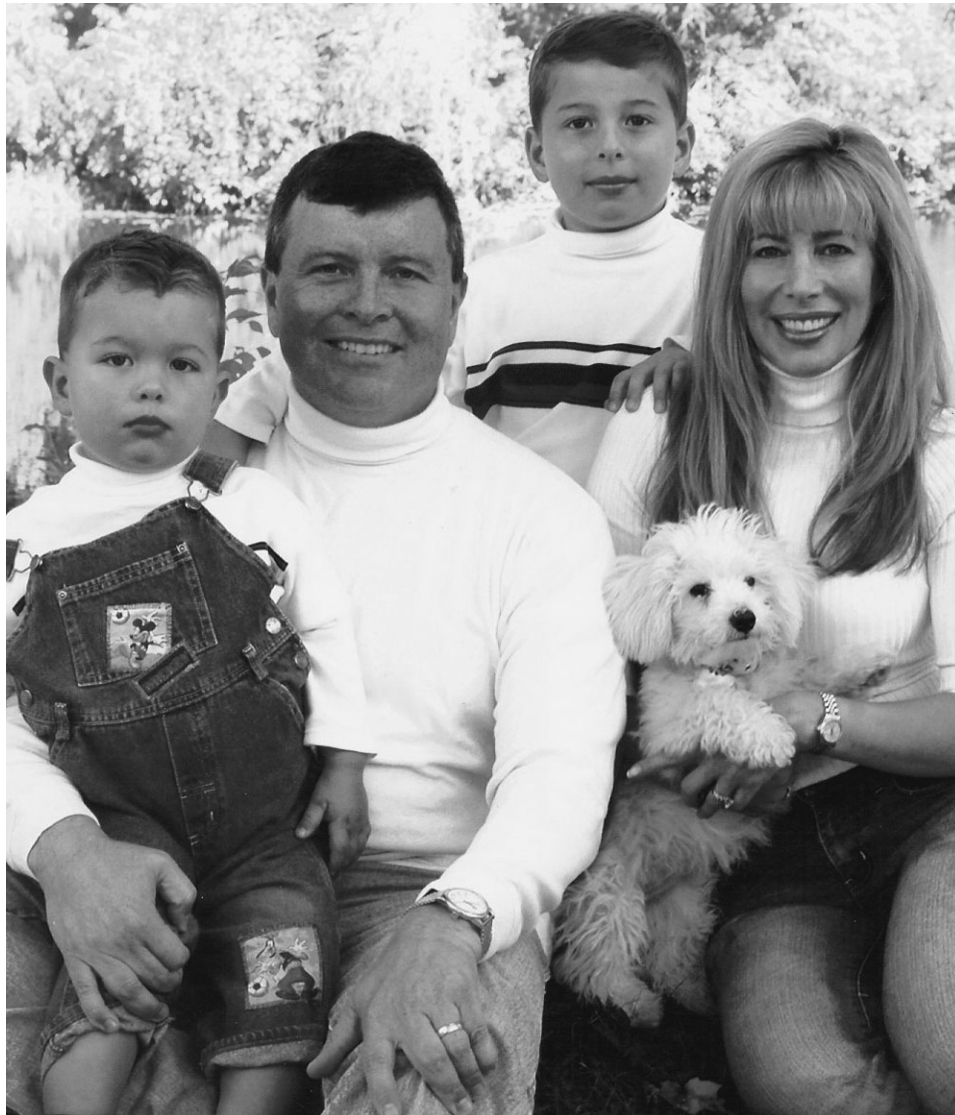
When a woman does it all, like Dr. Beatriz Porras, she has to be deliberate about her decisions. Time management is critical, but so is what she does with her time. A lot of planning and juggling go into making the best life she can for herself and her family. In fact, Porras found some time to speak with me between accompanying her two-year-old son to have tubes put in his ears in the morning and seeing patients in her office in the afternoon.



Porras came to the United States from Colombia, she is a board certified Dermatopathologist and the medical director of Skin Diagnostics Laser and Rejuvenation. (www.cincinnatiaskinlaser.com) A regular contributor to *Cincinnati Woman Magazine*, Porras is committed to educating the community. Outside of her professional life, she is the mother of two sons – eight-year-old Louie and two-year-old Marco Gabriel. She recognizes the pressures that come both internally and externally. “I have to be a mother, a wife and a doctor, as well as to look great, dress well and work hard.” Hard work and solid planning are crucial parts of having it all, and Porras shares lessons she has “learned the hard way.”

Professional

Ideally, Porras believes that a perfect world

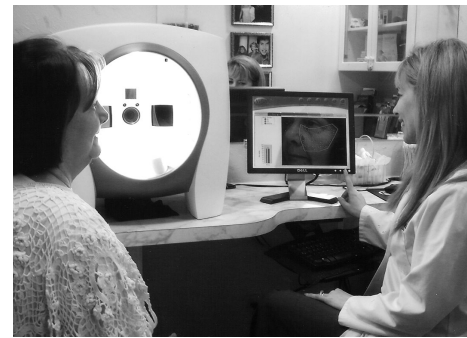


Dr. Beatriz H. Porras, Medical Director of Skin Diagnostics, Inc. and her husband Dr. Alvaro Ryes, also a physician in private practice, and their sons, eight-year-old Louie and two-year-old Marco Gabriel and the family dog, Lucy.

would mean that “women could work part-time and take care of their families in that way professional and family fulfilment can be accomplished. But that’s not possible for everyone. There are single women who work full time or even two jobs. Sometimes the boss doesn’t understand her situation.” Porras decided that being the sole practitioner in her office, rather than joining a larger medical group, was the right move for her and her family. This choice has bought her both the freedom and the challenges presented to any entrepreneur. She is able to set her own hours and maintains her office across the street from

her oldest son’s school. That offers advantages, especially when she gets an unexpected call from his school and has to pick him up. She can “take care of him and still work.” Ideally, she would have a day care in her office as a friend of hers has, but she doesn’t “have the space for it” in her current location.

Being an entrepreneur has its challenges too. If she were a physician in a larger practice, she could come to work, see her patients and go home at the end of the each day. However, she is responsible for patients as well as management, advertisement, and training. She also takes a hands-on approach to marketing by



Dr. Porras working with a patient to determine what procedures would best suit her needs.

designing her website and all the marketing brochures and materials. She relies on people to help in implementing her ideas, and most of her other business related issues are addressed after the children go to bed at night. Porras has learned that, for her, trying to multi-task between mothering and working doesn’t work. “When I’m in the office, I forget about everything else; when I’m with the kids, I do the same.”

Another challenge of being a sole practitioner is that she does not have the expertise of other doctors to rely upon. She must keep herself educated on all of the latest procedures, treatments and techniques. This involves frequent traveling for conferences and meetings. In those times, she relies heavily on her husband who is also a very busy Physician in private practice (Dr. Alvaro Ryes) and her support network for assistance. Maintaining her perspective is crucial. “Of course my kids are my priority,” says Porras, “but you still have to do a good job and give the best to your patients.”

Mother

When she is at home with her children, Porras “tries to have quality time with them” instead of trying to do everything at the same time. In addition to their daily interactions, she strives to “do something special with each one alone once per month.” Those activities could include, going to the movies, the park, ice skating or just having chocolate ice cream with them. Her goal is to provide that one-on-one intense focus children need to feel special. She makes it a high priority to make sure that, in her busy life, her “kids get enough.”

To her, one of the keys to success is to “find good help and people you can rely on.” That’s not always so easy in America, Porras points out. “In Colombia, most of the people have a maid. The maid helps out with all the house work; cleaning, getting the food ready etc. American women have to do it all... and you have to be a millionaire to afford a maid.”

With Porras’ extended family being in Colombia, she has come to rely on “friends and neighbors who are always willing to help” as well as a nanny she hired to help with her children.

Porras gets her children ready for school every morning before she leaves to go to work. She acknowledges that regardless of the situation, “the mother is the mother” and she takes the responsibility of the smooth operation of her family very seriously. “Find easy solutions,” she advises. She boasts that she can “make a good, nutritious dinner for her family in under five minutes.” She keeps her refrigerator organized and uses time savers in the kitchen.

Even with a fulfilling life, sometimes Porras has to explain her choices to her children. Louie, her oldest, sees some of his classmates’ stay-at-home mothers in the school volunteering often and wonders why his mother isn’t there more often. As a compromise, Porras holds an annual conference for kids about protecting their skin. Her kids feel very proud when she does that and sometimes she does wish she could do more. It’s important to remember, she advises, especially in these days when so much is made about the so-called Mommy Wars, that “everybody does what everybody can.”

Porras boils down her experience and wisdom into the following pointers for working mothers:

1. Set Priorities. Set both long and short term goals – for the day, for the week, for the month and for the year. Of course, some you will accomplish and some you won’t, but it will act as a map to keep you from losing your way.
2. Write everything down
3. Find good help you can rely on
4. Have a back up plan for unexpected situations, such as sick kids
5. Developing your own way to organize your kitchen and other areas of your home to save time
6. Give your kids responsibilities
7. Take time for yourself, have lunch with a friend once in a while, friends can give you so much.
8. Exercise regularly, walk, play a sport or do something good for yourself.
9. Try to eat healthy and don’t skip meals.
10. Don’t forget your husband or significant other, they need quality time as well. Send the kids with the sitter, friend or family and have a romantic date.
11. Last but not least don’t forget your appearance, you work hard so feel like a queen, dress like one and look like one.

Self-Care

Porras acknowledges the toll that a life such



Dr Porras and her staff. A believer in proper nutrition, she closes her office for lunch because, “you have to eat lunch to do a good job in the afternoon.”

as hers can take and reminds working mothers not to forget about self-care. “It’s hard to do everything yourself; you have to take time for yourself. It’s also very important to take vacations as often as you can. Life can be very stressful. Give yourself a break every three months, at least to get away for 2 to 3 days with your family.” It’s no secret that stress leads to illness. Keeping yourself healthy is important since, as she points out, “you must rely on prevention since you cannot have the luxury of getting sick.” Exercise, healthy eating and vitamins are important parts of her routine. She gets regular doctor and dental checkups, especially because she has a history of breast cancer in her family.

She also stresses the importance of nutrition. “Never skip a meal, no matter what.” In fact, she closes her entire office for lunch. She tells her staff, “You have to eat lunch to do a good job in the afternoon.” She does yoga twice per week and takes walks regularly with her kids and Lucy her dog. “You have to be good to yourself. You can’t give everything away to your kids and husband.”

When time is in short supply, it is easy to break dates with yourself. It’s important to stick to the commitments you have made to take care of yourself. After all, if you don’t take care yourself, eventually all other areas of your life will suffer. “Sometimes,” she asserts, “You have to say, ‘I am going to be selfish today.’ Make the time for something that really makes you feel good – like getting your hair done, a manicure, having lunch with a friend, or good chocolate ice cream.”

Porras works hard to maintain her full and fulfilling life. In fact, after reviewing her accomplishments and challenges, Porras only laments one thing that she would like more time to do. It’s a wish shared by many moms, across most circumstances. “I wish I could sleep more.”

Katie Hall is a local freelance writer.