



**AMERICAN COLLEGE  
OF RHEUMATOLOGY**  
EDUCATION • TREATMENT • RESEARCH

# **ACR Fellows-in-Training Subcommittee Recommendations on Balancing Family & Fellowship**

## **Table of Contents**

Top 10 TIPS for Enjoying Your Family during Fellowship	<b><i>Pages 2-3</i></b>
Recommended Facebook Groups	<b><i>Page 4</i></b>
Babysitting Resources	<b><i>Page 5</i></b>
Outsourcing Tools	<b><i>Page 6</i></b>



## **Top 10 TIPS for Enjoying Your Family during Fellowship**

### **1. Prepare as much as you can.**

As much as possible, try to plan ahead. If you know when you may need coverage, try to involve your program director and co-fellows as early as you can so that duty schedules can be rearranged. This is especially important if you know that you will be on a rotation with heavy clinical duties when you might need coverage. Similarly, apply for care as soon as possible if you are having or adopting a child. Many high-quality day care facilities have waiting lists of nearly a year. Unexpected circumstances happen, but it will help to alleviate stress if you have as much planned out ahead of time as you can.

### **2. Make contingency plans.**

As alluded to in #1, plans do not always go as expected. Children and other family members sometimes get sick, and it can be especially difficult when our duties to our patients and to our families conflict. Try to plan for the worst-case scenarios. For example, if you have a child, find out if you and/or your partner (if you have one) can work from home if a child is sick. If not, investigate back-up childcare services. Some institutions offer the Parents in a Pinch program, but you can also access these services through Care.com if they are not offered through your institution. It may also be possible to find local stay-at-home parents who can help in an emergency.

### **3. Ask for (and accept) help.**

We are not superheroes. Remember that having a family (in whatever shape that may take) is a universal experience, and there are many people who want to help to make life easier for you. If someone offers to help (laundry, food preparation, call, etc.), give that person a big “thank you” and accept the help. Remember that you would do the same.

### **4. Be flexible.**

This is a recurring theme (see #1 and #2), but plans sometimes change. Remember that you are smart and clever, and you will find a way to make these changes work out in your favor. You may even find that the new path works out even better for you than what you had originally planned. Whether you need to postpone your boards, defer the master’s program, or ever prolong your fellowship, try to embrace the changes and keep going.

### **5. Prioritize your time.**

As your time becomes more of a commodity, you may find that it makes sense to outsource certain tasks. Will hiring someone to clean your apartment help you get that paper submitted? Then do it! Will having food delivered help you to spend a few more extra hours playing with your child or talking to your partner? Then do it, and don’t feel guilty about it. Remember that your time is a valuable resource.



**6. Live in the present.**

If you are with your family, try to be fully engaged with your family. If you are at work, try to be fully engaged with your work. There will always be a pull to do work when you are spending quality time with your family, but try to resist. Likewise, try to let go of the guilt about not being with your family when you are at work. Quality of time is as important or more important than quantity.

**7. Sleep when you can.**

Sleep is important for your health and mental clarity, and it is an especially scarce resource for new parents. Try to make this a priority, and remember that you will get more sleep (eventually).

**8. Expand your circle of friends.**

A change to your family can re-shape your whole social network. You may find that making friends who share your experiences can help you build your social life in a new way. There are many social media platforms that you may find helpful. You may also find opportunities to make new friends at your child's day care, in your neighborhood, or with people at work whom you would not have otherwise met.

**9. Advocate for yourself.**

Get clarity early on about your institution's parental and/or family leave policies, and try to get a written statement from your program director confirming the approval of your intended leave. If you feel that the time allowance is not adequate, discuss with your program director and/or Human Resources whether other forms of leave (e.g. other institutional allowances or FMLA) might be available to you.

**10. Be grateful.**

Having a family comes with many challenges, but it is a wonderful experience. Although your supply of compassion may be running low when you are sleep deprived or stressed, just remember to thank your colleagues, friends, and family when you can for all of their support.



### **Recommended Facebook Groups:**

- **Association of Women in Rheumatology**  
The Association of Women in Rheumatology's mission is to promote the science and practice of Rheumatology, and foster the advancement and education of women in Rheumatology.
- **Physician Mom Group (PMG)**  
Physician moms group (PMG) encourages discussions of anything and everything related to babies and kids of all ages. Subjects include but are not limited to feeding, caring, education, activities, product recommendations etc.
- **Local (place your city's name) Physician Mom Group (PMG)**  
Search Facebook for your local city's physician moms group.



## **Babysitting Resources**

- **Care**  
<https://www.care.com/>
- **UrbanSitter**  
<https://www.urbansitter.com/>
- **Back-Up Care Program by Bright Horizon**  
<https://www.brighthorizons.com/programs/back-up-care>
- **ABC Nannies**  
<http://www.abcnannies.com/>
- **Nextdoor**  
<https://nextdoor.com/>



## Outsourcing Tools

- **FancyHands**  
<https://www.fancyhands.com/>  
Helps you delegate simple task such as scheduling a pediatrician's apt, or figuring out your next vacation or date nights
- **Thumbtack**  
<https://www.thumbtack.com/>  
Find the next house cleaner, family photographer or handyman through this search engine that puts you in contact with freelancer in your area