

## THE BALANCE PROJECT | No. 35: Karen Sutton MD, Orthopaedic Surgeon

December 5th, 2014

Welcome to THE BALANCE PROJECT: a series of relevant and refreshingly candid interviews featuring inspiring and accomplished women talking about balance. I've always been curious—and maybe a little obsessed—about how women I admire manage the tragically glorified “doing it all” craze. So I asked them. As I suspected, no one really does “it all.” Everyone’s making sacrifices somewhere. And that should make us feel a little better. Every Friday I’ll feature a new interview. Here’s what Karen Sutton had to say...

**No. 35: Karen Sutton MD, Orthopaedic Surgeon**

**Age:** 38  
**Where I live:** Fairfield, CT  
**Job:** Orthopaedic Surgeon, Yale University  
**Ages/genders of kids:** Three boys ages 2, 3, and 4. Pregnant with a baby girl!



**Is the job you have now the same one you had before kids? If not, how and why did you change directions?**  
 Yes.

**Do you think having “it all” is realistic or overrated and why?**  
 I think having it all is just amazing. I feel like I am thrilled to be able to continue what I trained intensely to do. After 14.5 years of education leading toward being an orthopaedic surgeon, I love living out my career—going into the OR, fixing people’s problems, and then coming home to my husband and three beautiful children.

**What part of “balance” can you just not seem to figure out?**  
 Transition is difficult for me. It is hard to turn off the orthopaedic switch from work and turn on the “Mom” roll immediately as I walk in the door. Everything is organized, perfected, and polished at work and everything at home is dynamic, unpredictable, and a little crazy at times.

**What part of “balance” are you getting better at?**  
 I have improved this year at taking care of myself—I joined a CrossFit gym, ran a half marathon, and paid more attention to my eating during the day (which at times could be very minimal due to my crazy schedule).

**What was the best advice you ever heard on balance...**  
**From a mentor/co-worker?** “Take care of yourself first and the rest will follow.”  
**From your mother?** “Keep your wits about you.”  
**From your kids?** “Are you happy, Mommy?” They always want me to live in the moment and enjoy myself. Greatest advice!

**If you had one extra hour in each day and you couldn’t work or be with your family, how would you spend that hour?**  
 I would love to wake up and read the digital newspaper, enjoy eggs and avocado and fresh orange juice, and go for a quick run or bike ride around the neighborhood.

**What do you wish you’d known when you were 20?**  
 Having children requires much more “rolling with the punches” than I could ever imagine, and it changes your life forever. I would do absolutely anything for my family.

**What do you hope to know by time you’re 60?**  
 I hope to appreciate all of the little things in life and know that taking the time to dance with my children and have a glass of wine with my husband are some of life’s greatest pleasures.

**What one part of your home life do you wish you could outsource?**  
 ORGANIZING—prior to children I was a master planner and organizer. I find that to be an extreme challenge now: toys multiply, events come out of nowhere, and the mail has a mind of its own.

**Whose job do you wish you had?**  
 I think I really do like my job if I could rid myself of the documentation and administrative tasks.

**Whose job are you glad you don’t have?**  
 Personal assistant. I enjoy being in control of my schedule and taking the time as a I need it to be a “Room Mom” for my children at their school.

**Favorite books?**  
*Oh, the Places You’ll Go* by Dr. Seuss and *The House of God* by Samuel Shem.

**What are you reading right now?**  
*When We Fall* by my great friend Emily Liebert.

**Biggest vices...**  
**Activity?** When I get the chance to work out, I end up overdoing it (trying to make up for lost time and ignoring my competitive attitude) and subsequently am mildly exhausted the rest of the day!  
**Food?** GUMMI BEARS, hands down.  
**Website?** AMAZON—yikes.

**How many hours do you generally sleep at night during the week?**  
 7.

**What do you read every morning?**  
*New York Post* headlines and *CNN* headlines as well as the weather forecast to dress my boys.

**Complete the following sentences:**  
**I think I** can tackle any goal I set.  
**I wish I** could train and compete in an Ironman Triathlon by the time I turn 45.  
**My kids:** are the shining stars of my life and I “try” (albeit not always successfully) to treasure every moment with them. (OK, maybe not the temper tantrums and food thrown on the ground, arggh!)

**Do you have a personal motto or favorite saying?**  
 “Never bend your head. Always hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye.” —Helen Keller



occasional yoga class.

**About Karen:**  
 Karen Sutton is a mother of three boys and an orthopaedic surgeon at Yale University. She specializes in sports medicine, treats athletes from weekend warriors to elite professionals, and is the head team surgeon for the USA Women’s Lacrosse Team. Karen loves being active with her family, including hiking and playing chase with her toddlers in the backyard. She has an interest in fitness, has competed in numerous triathlons and marathons, and is currently exploring the world of CrossFit and barre classes while throwing in an

**Find more about Karen here:**  
 Twitter: @ksutt001

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