Balancing Career, Motherhood, and Well-being: A Journey of Priorities and Faith Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Russian Woman Syndrome

I would say the most important thing is you can do everything. You just can't do it at the same time. You know, you can work, achieve the highest levels you can have children.

Be a wife. Travel. It's just not doable. At the same time. Unless you don't want a consequence, a health consequence and. And I do believe that that kind of rushing women's syndrome is the road to chronic illness for us as women.

Welcome to doctor Talks, the podcast where every episode leads to a healthier you. Join us as we navigate the world of optimal health, uncovering groundbreaking strategies to conquer chronic disease.

In each episode, we'll bring you the latest insights from leading health experts, medical innovators, and wellness warriors. If you're seeking to transform your health journey, or if you're looking for answers to burning questions.

You've come to the right place. Get ready to unlock the secrets of lifelong health and vitality. This is Doctor Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.

Hi everyone. Welcome back to the Integrative Health Podcast with Doctor Jen. Today we're going to have a really great conversation about the Russian woman syndrome.

We're going to be talking to Victoria Bhatt who is an attorney. She graduated from Ava Marie in Naples, Florida.

Victoria's Legal Career and Public Defender Work

She was a formal is a formal public defender working for the state of Florida for most of her career. Now she is a mother of three, a crunchy mom, and she is transitioning to part, part time work.

And she's going to be homeschooling her daughter. Welcome to the podcast, Victoria. Really excited to have you here. Hi. Thank you, doctor Jen. It's nice to be here. Yes.

So we met on Instagram and had such a thoughtful conversation about careers in motherhood. Victoria an attorney, me, a doctor and you, everyone listening out there.

Whether your career is being a school teacher or, you know, whatever you do, whatever you do, it's hard to balance both. So, Victoria, tell us a little bit about your background.

Like high school undergrad. When did you decide you wanted to be a lawyer? Yeah. So I grew up in Miami. I went to high school there. I actually moved to Italy when I graduated high school, and I studied law there.

I pretty much just knew that I wanted to go into law. And I got my first lower level degree in law in Italy. And then I decided to move back to the U. S., and so I had to do law school all over again.

So that's how my journey to the law got started. That's awesome. And did you know, Veronica, that you were going to be a big public defender? I mean, these are the lawyers that we see on the TV shows.

Yeah, I mean, it was it was such a great experience, a tremendous amount of experience in the legal field that it takes most lawyers, probably an entire career to get as assistant public defenders, were able to get in a really short amount of time.

And, you know, it's very much like what you would see on TV were managing a courtroom of like, you know, up to 100 clients at a time. So you're just kind of thrown out there and it's kind of like sink or swim, but it's great experience.

And you know, it was really humbling to be able to represent, you know, the most difficult members and like the most the people who suffered the most in society, so mentally ill who were accused of a crime as well.

Yeah. So we'll go into that a little bit specifically. So you were taking care of mentally ill clients? Yeah. So I actually was in charge of the psychiatric hold cases in my county.

So in the state of Florida, there's a law called the Baker Act. And basically, if you are harm to yourself or others, you can be held against your will for up to 72 hours.

There's more to the law, but that's kind of the gist of it. And so I did represent these clients for about five and a half years. And so that meant, you know, I was in mental health facilities on crisis stabilization units basically four days a week with my clients.

Court was also held within the facility. So, you know, for somebody who did not come from a medical or mental health background, it was it was a very eye opening experience for sure.

Okay. And it's stressful too. So the psychiatric cases and the holes, I mean, it's it's a lot of stress. It's not I'm not saying that like criminal law wouldn't be stressful because I'm sure that would be too.

But this is very emotional, very draining. I'm sure.

Stress, Motherhood, and the Cost of Doing It All

Yeah. The best I can describe it is it's kind of like a slow drip of stress trauma. I learned, you know what second hand trauma is, which I had no idea about.

And, you know, I think that's part of the problem is women is we just absorb, absorb, absorb. And so much is on our shoulders already, and we just don't realize when enough is enough, you know, until we're there and it's, you know, too late, basically.

And so we're just kind of rushing and rushing and rushing. And I had a really great boss. So, you know, it had nothing to do with the organization or anything.

It's just a reality for women, you know, who are in careers, have children and are trying to do it all at the same time. You know, I remember at the height of Covid in 2020, I was pregnant with my third child and I was actually going into the facilities still, you know, everybody was staying home and everybody was, you know, hunkering down.

And I was I was going into the hospitals like at the height of it. And, you know, it's just in so many careers. I think as women, we kind of brag about who stays the latest at the office or who does the most work.

And I think we should be bragging about who's doing the the least work, really, because that's just, you know, a fast track to to burnout for women. Absolutely.

So when you were doing all this work, you got like this jumpstart in your career, this big position coming out of law school, you were just married at that time, no children yet.

You said you were pregnant with your first. Yes. So when I first became an assistant public defender, I was recently married and I got pregnant pretty quickly with my first.

That's actually another funny story. So with my first, I actually went into labor in court during trial call. How appropriate. You know, and I remember thinking at the time, I can set a trial for tomorrow.

This probably is not the real thing. And so it's just kind of this mindset. And now when I think back, I'm like, what was wrong with me? Like, why would I have been thinking that way?

And I think it's just a way of thinking that we're taught as women like to just keep going. Like the more you put on your plate, the more you can do, the more you do, the more you can achieve, you know?

And there's we're never taught stillness that it's okay to slow down. It doesn't mean you're weak. Wait to the contrary. And you know, I wish I could look back and tell 28 year old me these things and be like, what are you doing?

Like, slow down, you know? But I think it's it's something that that a lot of my friends who are also attorneys are experiencing, female attorneys are experiencing as well at this point in their life and career.

They feel the exact the exact same way. Yeah. I think it's so hard because you went into law to help people. I went into medicine to help people, and you have to have a certain level of drive and, I don't know, just perseverance.

And then you get there and it's great and you love it. But then when you start having children, things, things change a little bit. And I think we're kind of fed this lie in modern day society that you can you can have both, you can do both.

You can burn the candle at both ends. So I think for you this, you really felt this and this was really personal. When did you realize that maybe you you shouldn't just be all in on law and you shouldn't just be doing both.

So I think there were a couple big moments, you know, I had my first child, he had special needs, and I had to take him to a lot of therapies. And so I was really grateful that this position, because I was driving around to different facilities and different places, I was able to take him to those therapies.

But when I during Covid, I was pregnant with my third child and I had a pregnancy complication called placenta previa. And out of nowhere I had a big bleed.

So I was basically stuck in the hospital for two months during Covid, couldn't see my other two kids for two months until I delivered. And when I was admitted the second time, which the doctor was like, you're here for good now, you know, I my first thought was, if I tell somebody my routine of how I drive around, they're going to think I'm crazy.

The like, I was literally terrified. I was like, nobody's going to like, drive around like I do. Take him to this therapy that, therapy, do this, that.

And so that was my first moment, but I still did it. Stop. I did, you know, go back to work after my third child. But the biggest moment was in the summer of 2022 and my health just started deteriorating.

I, I just kept losing weight, could not keep anything down. I had a positive screening for colon cancer. I forget which test it was, but. And so that was terrifying.

And during that time when I had that positive test, one of my clients at the hospital, I specifically remember him saying that his wife had just been diagnosed with stage four colon cancer and had a newborn.

And I was like, wow, this is the absolute worst time for me to be hearing this right before I'm going into my colonoscopy. Luckily, I did not have cancer, thank God, praise God, but I had four stomach ulcers and there was no rhyme or reason because I was negative for, you know, the bacteria that causes ulcers typically.

And that was that. And so that to me was the sign like, okay. And one of my friends, my dear friends told me, like, God's putting you at a crossroads here.

What are you going to do? Like there's no clearer sign now, you know. And she's like, what you decide now is

going to be your life five years from now.

So that was like my biggest wake up call. And I did make a change, and I, I did leave that job, which, you know, I, I really loved who I worked for dearly, but it was just it was just too stressful for me, you know, at that point.

Health Wake-Up Call and Leaving the Job

And I finally not got knocked over the head and realized it. So, yeah. Now how did the people react around you? How did colleagues, maybe mentors react when you step down from this position that, you know, that's what you were working for, right?

In your younger days? This is what you know. Oh, you're successful if you are, you know, a public defender and a big time lawyer. That is success, right? I mean, that's the lie.

We're kind of bad, but but how did people react when you told them? I think, you know, part of it is like these jobs become a part of our identity. It's like the weirdest thing.

And we don't even realize it, especially when you're somewhere for that long, you know? So even for myself, like it had become a really big part of how I saw myself.

You know, I was an assistant public defender. Like, that was who I was. I think the people around me, I mean, some were surprised, some weren't surprised because I think looking back, it was probably pretty obvious, like how stressed out I was.

And it and again, it wasn't it wasn't the job per se. It's just everything together at once. You know, the stress of having three children if you have a child that has different needs, if you have more than one that has different needs and we're just not told these things in law school, I'm sure probably in medical school, nobody is teaching women like, hey, check in with yourself, do something for yourself.

Create a morning routine or ritual. That's something that you can fall back on a coping skill. And so these are all things, you know, that it took me like 15 years to to realize that I wish these things could be imparted on young professional women, because of course, I'm not saying don't go to law school, don't go to medical school, but be mindful and just know you can't do everything at the same time without a consequence.

Yeah, I remember I was at trauma hospital in Pennsylvania in medical school rotations, and I remember the trauma team, this one, like senior surgical resident, he was pretty rude.

And he was just like, yeah, I hate women doctors and med students because they just they just end up in the kitchen. They waste all this money on medical education and then they like drop out and then they're not doctors after a while.

And I'm like, that's so offensive. And and I'm like, I'm going to prove him wrong. And all this stuff. And here's the thing. Like, I when I kept having more kids, I went more part time in the E. R., but also when I go to when I would go into the E. R., I was the freshest E. R.

doctor there. And I wasn't, like, jaded or grumpy because I had better work life balance. And I'm sure we see this with lawyers, doctors, any job, even school teachers.

If you're burnout, if you are not giving the best at work and at home, there's a problem there, there's a disconnect. And I don't necessarily think things are set up where, you know, a working mother, where it supports a mother being at home for their children and being 100%.

So I think that's where the disconnect was. And I remember I will always remember that that surgical resident saying that. And I'm like, that's just offensive.

I just don't think that we're doing it the right way. It doesn't mean that women can't be in the workforce. It's just we need to do things different. Why do we have to always do what, like what? Men?

You know, we don't have to act exactly like them. We could do things a little differently. That's my take on it, because I was there. But you did say that you had consequences for that.

And they were the ulcers, the physical consequences. Did you have any emotional consequences that you or your husband or your children noticed? Oh, yeah.

I mean, I think my ulcers went hand in hand with like, emotional consequences. You know, I definitely had a lot of anxiety and, you know, since my stint in the hospital for two months, which, you know, for somebody who's crunchy is like your worst nightmare, basically to be in a hospital surrounded by medical staff, like constantly trying to push interventions.

I knew for two months, you know, I definitely became more sensitive to health related issues. And so having that happen to me with the ulcers, it was extremely anxiety inducing.

And, you know, and I think the emotional consequences, you become more short with everyone in your life, your short with your husband, with your kids.

You just don't have that mental bandwidth to be there. So even if even if you're done with your job early, let's say you're just you can't just then turn the mom, the patient, loving mom and wife on right after you've turned that light off.

So I think it's it's just it's really hard to do in the thick of it as a mom to be a professional.

Identity, Work-Life Balance, and Homeschooling

I don't know what the what the right answer is. I mean, I even think, you know, part time is, is difficult if you're wanting to be truly present, with multiple children.

And I, I remember a few weeks ago, I had a meeting scheduled at school for one of my children, and I got to school and like, which kid is this about again?

And it's like you're fighting a war and like, all these different fronts, you know? So I think emotionally you just you're very short. You have very little patience for anybody or anything else once you're done with work.

And it just makes things very difficult. Yeah. Yeah, I, I would agree with that. When I, when I close my brick and mortar, I just felt such a relief. And I know like the Lord has been like kind of urging me to close it.

And when I asked like why? And I heard like he was like it was a distraction. And I remember like, I would bring that home because I owned a business and it was different from when I was at the E. R.

and I would know, I'm like, I'm not bringing this home with me. When I walk in the door. But when you when I owned that business, it was coming into my house and following me and the emails and the phone calls.

So it's it is hard to disconnect. So I, I am very grateful that I heard that I have share a lot of nudging to, to shut that door and have a better one open.

And those listening, I mean, you might not be in the same situation as us as mothers. It might be something else that's distracting you. It might not even be a job.

It could be something else that's distracting you from your family and your children, or what you're really being called to do. I think that what you had said earlier, Veronica, about the identity aspect, I think that is something that I wanted to come back to because it happened to me.

I remember I was on fire for the Lord, like in high school and going into undergrad, and then I started putting my identity in. I'm a doctor and then my identity in I'm a mother instead of putting my identity in Christ and Jesus.

So I think when we get off track just a little bit, then we just can go way down on a path of stress and anxiety and depression, right? A lot of people are not not doing okay in this world, so we just have to focus our eyes on what's important.

And you made some big decisions since that the ulcers two years ago. And you told me that you're going to be homeschooling your daughter. Yes. That's probably the biggest change.

I'm still apprehensive about it. But, you know, when you start being more present and, like, opening up your eyes to everything going on, I started noticing my daughter was not doing well in school.

So what did I do? I like threw a bunch of tutoring on her, which we had been doing for the last year. I had to have all these meetings with the school.

They disagree and I disagree on the path forward. And so I'm going to be pulling her out of school. And these are things I would never have even had the time or bandwidth to notice.

If I was working full time outside the home, I would have just thought, you know, let things continue the status quo. So again, like you just don't have the bandwidth.

And I can't imagine how many women this is happening to. Like, I would not have realized what was going on had I not made this big life change already work wise.

And so I'm going to be pulling her out because I, I, I've tried everything else. So I'm like, I gotta make a drastic change. And, you know, I want to be the influencer in her life.

I don't want it to be other students or people that are essentially raising her every day for seven hours. So I'm really I'm looking forward to deepening my bond with her.

And she's my middle child. She's also my toughest, which it'll it'll be tough for sure, because we already kind of butt heads. But I'm really looking forward to kind of deepening our bond and trying to help her, you know, where she's been struggling and dedicating that time to her, that, you know, a school can't dedicate because they have to teach 20, 25 children in a class. So it's understandable.

Yeah, I think that's amazing. And you're stepping into where your child needs you. And this could be this could be a child. This could be a husband. This could be taking care of your house.

I mean, I feel like sometimes it's like, why? Why are we going to work when our house is not put together? And I think that's one thing we need to make sure our family, our house is put together and operating smoothly and there's going to be bumps, you know, and we need to have some buffer and time set for those bumps because I know for me, this is something that is it's difficult for me to just rest, right?

I don't want to rest. I just want to be busy all the time. Recovering Type-A personality. So you need to have that buffer space. You need to set aside ten minutes in the morning to spend time with Jesus.

You need that. And when we're over scheduling or you're working 9 to 5, you come home and you're working five to, you know, ten with your family. Where does it make sense?

You know, so I think that using if you've gotten education, you know, you can still use that. I, I like I said I was going more and more part time and I'm making it work for my family now.

And I'm still using my knowledge in medicine. There will also be a time where maybe when the kids are all in college, that you can go back and you can use that degree.

Is that something that you've thought about, Veronica like, are you at peace with right now? I'm just like you said. You were going part, part time, still staying in law, keeping up credentials, and then maybe later on you would have that space.

Yeah. I mean, I think what really helped me the most was creating a morning ritual that I, I mean, I've been doing it now for a couple of years. So I, I wake up at 430 every morning and I pray, I do some breathing exercises, I exercise like intense exercise, I do sauna.

So I think that like having that as the cornerstone of everything going forward is going to be really critical, no matter what I do, whether it's going back to law, staying home and homeschooling, that was just really critical to recovering for me.

And then as far as the law, my my husband is also an attorney, so he's going to be doing the full time lawyer thing. And I'm going to just be helping with, you know, cases that might arise from his cases, consumer protection cases.

But again, that's going to be part time, part time. And if it arises. So it's not going to be the one thing I said I can't do is a job where I have to be at a certain place at a certain time, every day, even if it is part time, because that certain place at a certain time, every day is going to be with my kids now.

So it's, you know, it's flipping from being, you know, work at a certain time every day to kids at a certain time, every day. And if a case fits in here and there, then that's great.

And if it doesn't, then that's fine too, you know? But it's definitely a big mind switch because when you're used to over scheduling yourself and I've done this several times, you know, recently, like I had scheduled dentist appointments back to back with a doctor's appointment and had to rush here and there.

And I still get a high from that. Like, I still get that like rush, like, wow. Like I got all these things done and I have to catch myself. And now I'm like pretty good at doing it.

And I'm like, oh no, no, no. Like that's not good. You know, it's not good to do all these things in one day. It's it's what leads down a difficult road for women and for moms.

Absolutely. And and it could be a road to chronic illness. And you might not see it in that day, that month, that year, but it catches up with you. And I love the idea of like, a morning ritual, you know, making sure you're working out, drinking water, getting good sleep, all those simple things. There should be non-negotiables.

And so you can operate in a space of health for your family. Because honestly, like what happens when the mother gets sick like, yeah, yeah, yeah like crumbles.

Yeah. No. Absolutely. And you know, having that morning ritual, I mean, by the time 8 a.m. rolls around, I've had a mini day to myself.

Morning Rituals, Recovery, and Advice for Younger Women

So it's like I feel refreshed when I start the day versus feeling like rolling out of bed. Like, yeah, I got a couple hours more sleep, but I don't feel more rested than I do after my routine, you know, every morning.

So, you know, I think that's critical movement. And I also fast as well. That has been just a total life hack game changer that I will do forever. Probably.

So just these little things as women that can be intuitive and really just help our lifestyles and in turn help our families flourish to. Yeah, absolutely.

And women, we just we have so many balls to hold and it's very hard. I hear it from working women to stay at home women. I mean, we need to talk about our struggles.

We need to be honest about it and lean on each other. It's not easy. What we're doing. Raising children is really hard. Like I joke about it like medical school residency was easier.

Like working in the ear at a level one trauma center. That was easier than raising children. Raising children is very trying emotionally, physically. So we're all in this together.

It's it's it's a doozy, right? Yeah, it's it's definitely way harder than I anticipated. I thought that, you know, the early years were going to be the hardest ones.

Having a baby and a toddler. And it turns out. Nope. Little, little kids, little problems, bigger kids, bigger problems. And, you know, as they get their own personalities, their own me, their own, you know, it.

Everything just increases as far as what we have to give to them and even emotionally. And so you have to be even more present emotionally as they get older to fulfill those needs and create a lasting bond.

And it's been it's been very difficult. I mean, you know, sometimes I wish there was a manual like, okay, my kid asked me this, like, here's the tab. Let me turn to that and, you know, give the explanation.

But, you know, it's it's the most fulfilling thing in the world, but it's also the most difficult thing. And I think the hardest thing has been, you know, taking like creating this new identity, you know, you you go from this identity that you've been taught from when you were a kid.

You got to achieve, achieve, achieve this professional thing. And then it's like, this, is this who I want to be? Like, once you, you know, have kids, you're like, is this who I am?

And you just kind of go through that identity crisis of figuring out who you are. You know, I and, you know, for me, at this stage in my life, I am first and foremost a mom and a wife.

And, well, I should say, first and foremost a follower of Christ, but also mom and wife. And that's the season that I'm in. And it's hard. It's hard for women to accept that.

I think it's hard for me still at times, you know, but I'll I'm still going to be a lawyer. You know, my mom was like, oh my gosh, you're going to quit your job.

You're not going to be a lawyer anymore. And I'm like, mom, I'm still a lawyer. Like, you know, it's just I'm. And I can still practice, like, right now.

I can just turn around and go handle a case, you know? And I'm like, I just don't want to. And that's okay. I'm like, actually, it's really the ultimate flex that I don't have to turn around and go handle whatever case, you know, to, to make money.

And, you know, I'm like, so it's kind of reframing your thinking to, on so many levels, so many layers to peel back on that. But yeah, absolutely. What closing advice would you give to someone that is listening in?

They're maybe in their 20s or they're just starting out in their career? What would you tell them looking back at everything you've been through? I would say the most important thing is you can do everything.

You just can't do it. At the same time, you know, you can work, achieve the highest levels. You can have children, be a wife, travel. It's just not doable.

At the same time, unless you don't want a consequence, a health consequence. And and I do believe that that kind of rushing women's syndrome is the road to chronic illness for us as women.

So if I could tell myself, if I could tell something to myself, 28 year old me, I would say, do everything you want right now. But you know, the minute that you have your baby, you need to slow down.

Yes, I love that. That's beautiful. And gosh, if you're rushing and doing all these things, the when they're little will just fly by too fast. I mean, I had so much to say about that.

Like with my first child, I don't have as many memories of his like infancy and toddlerhood. And it's something I kind of do beat myself up over a little bit now.

But, yeah, that's what I would. That's what I would tell younger me. Yeah. Well, now you have a beautiful testimony to share with all the young professionals out there and, oh, I just, I, I pray blessings over homeschooling.

I know you said you were feeling a little bit nervous about it. It's going to be wonderful. It's not going to be easy, but it will be wonderful. And how can those listening out there reach you?

So I can be reached by email? My email will be, I think, down in the comments. It's Veronica at Lynn Law group.com. And that'll be posted with the episode I believe as well.

Yeah, it will be. And I think, you know, they can reach out to you. I know this is a really tough conversation. So I love what you said about you can do everything, but you just can't do it all at once without consequences.

That is, that's beautiful and that's the truth. So thank you so much, Veronica, for being here today and being so vulnerable with us. Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks.

We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health. Each day is a new opportunity to make choices that empower your well-being.

For more insights and strategies, subscribe to our podcast and visit our website w ww di doctor talks.com. Stay connected, stay healthy and join us next time on Doctor Talks.

Real talks from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.