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I am a phytoplankton ecologist, one-half of a dual-career couple, mother of three, professor, and advisor.

My graduate training at Harvard—over 20 years ago—was primarily centered on questions of nutrient dynamics and primary production in “blue water.” I studied how algae could obtain sufficient nutrient for growth in waters that had depleted nutrients, leading to investigations on the regeneration rates of nitrogen in all forms. These questions now seem so simple—we even debated whether bacteria were important in the ocean! My work has become much more focused on the coastal realm, where the issue is one of nutrient saturation, not nutrient limitation. My current work is mainly examining the linkage between eutrophication and harmful bloom species, and how the form of nutrients, as well as the total amount of nutrients, may result in harmful algal outbreaks. Although most of my work is carried out in Chesapeake Bay, I have had recent projects in Australia, Brazil, Kuwait, and Florida.



In the early days of my career, it was not unusual for me to be the only woman on a cruise (60 days across the Indian Ocean, for example), the only woman at a national meeting, the only woman at a workshop. My daughter was born when I was on the faculty at Wood Hole Oceanographic Institution. She was (as I was often told) the first child to be born to a woman scientist at WHOI. Shortly thereafter my husband, Todd Kana, and I moved to the Horn Point Laboratory, as we were both offered academic jobs at the same institution—a rare opportunity! My son was born the following year, also the first child of a woman scientist at the Horn Point Laboratory. When my second son arrived three years later, there were so many kids appearing at Horn Point Laboratory that we were able to get a day care center started on campus, one that is thriving to this day.

Todd and I have managed two careers and three kids somehow. We drove separate cars to work everyday for 15 years as we were on different pick-up schedules (eco-unfriendly, but necessary). We have rarely attended the same meeting or conference, but have managed a few collaborative projects. Our family stepped in to help when necessary and evolving institutional attitudes helped enormously.

Our children are now well beyond the years of child care (in high school and college now), but the balancing act continues. All are competitive sailors, with accomplishments that parents can rightly brag about. The days of scheduling play dates seem easy to us now; now we are scheduling weekend practices out of state, and arranging logistics for national and international competitions. I suppose the love of water is in their genes. I wouldn't want it any other way.

I look around now at our graduate students and see mostly female faces. What a change! These students will face many challenges, academically and personally. However, none of them should have to question whether they can have both a scientific career and a family.