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Denise Davis, MSW Student

It takes a lot of discipline to juggle the demands of grad school, my husband and I plan dates and I have to plan dates and spend some time outside commitments. Sometimes it means explaining to friends and family that I may be unavailable for a few weeks, but also that my absence is only a short period of time in the big scheme of our overall lives.

I found creative ways to balance school, my family, and personal life. I send quick texts, I send quick texts, instead of having long phone calls, I pull all-nighters instead of having long phone calls, I pull all-nighters...
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And I try to take time for me—well if this only positive ways to de-stress and breathe through it all. I'll all be worth it on graduation day!
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Being in graduate school doesn’t mean isolating yourself from your family and friends. Here are some tips from other students about how to find a healthy balance that keeps everyone happy.

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Are your family and friends prepared for your graduate studies?

Completing a graduate degree usually requires assistance and cooperation from those who are nearest and dearest to you. Here are a few things to consider:

• Is your spouse, partner, or significant other fully supportive of your desire to obtain an MSW? Have you talked with them about how this will change your lifestyle? For example, they may not see as much of you as they’d like. Or they may have to take on additional obligations such as cleaning, cooking, child care, and other household tasks since your time will be limited and you could be more tired than usual.

• Do you have young children? Have you planned for child care or made back-up plans? Have you talked to family and friends about ways they can help (i.e., carpooling or after-school activities)?

Being in graduate school doesn’t mean isolating yourself from your family and friends. Here are some tips from other students about how to find a healthy balance that keeps everyone happy.

1. Look for ways to involve your family in your education. Allow your children to participate with you in volunteer events that will also count for your human rights assignments. Share what you’ve learned in your courses and field experiences. Keep them connected to what you’re doing.

2. If you have school-age children, do your homework together—you’ll be serving as an excellent role model.

3. Improve your time management. Prepare “To Do” lists for the day, week, and semester. This will give everyone a better sense of when you’re available.

4. Get rid of extra obligations. Think about what your priorities are and how you want to use the free time that you have available. There will be plenty of time to resume these activities when you have graduated with an MSW!

Is this the right time for you to be in graduate school?

This is the BIG question you must answer for yourself. There are creative ways to overcome the challenges you may face in graduate study, but the time to find these solutions is before you begin your MSW program. Talk to your family, friends, colleagues, and others who have completed a graduate program and assess for yourself if the time is right to enter the program. The MSW academic advisor in Columbus and the coordinators at the regional campuses (Newark, Mansfield, and Lima) are happy to discuss your options and possible challenges. Above all, our goal is help you successfully complete your MSW studies. For contact information, visit the college website at csw.osu.edu/degreeprograms/msw.

Can you afford to go to graduate school now?

Unfortunately, being a graduate student is expensive. Are you prepared? The college offers some scholarships that you can apply for but these will not cover the majority of your expenses, which will include:

• Books and supplies (laptop and software, paper, copying, etc.). Consider buying books online from discount suppliers or use e-textbooks (if they’re available). Use the computers in the student lounge, the computer lab on the second floor of Stillman Hall, or the library.

• Transportation and parking expenses for classes and your field practicum. You can take the bus to campus to avoid the cost of parking or carpooled with other students if you live some distance from campus.

• Professional clothing for your field placement. Try shopping at consignment stores for nice, inexpensive professional clothing.

• Eating on campus. Bring your lunch to campus and use the refrigerator in the student lounge.

Are you really ready for graduate school?

Balancing family, school, and work

College of Social Work

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MSW