

Tania



Photos by SANDRA LAURIN

Jones

on **BALANCING** family and athletic goals

Does fitting in a regular running schedule on top of all your other responsibilities seem **IMPOSSIBLE**?

Is trying to squeeze in a training program for a marathon around a marriage, kids and a job **STRESSING YOU OUT**?

RELAX. With a bit of planning and some wisdom from the experts, it is possible. In fact, with the right plan, you might even find running helps you succeed in the other parts of your life.

Follow the example of one of Canada's top marathoners, Tania Jones. Nobody can speak from experience like she can. Just a few months after the birth of her second child, Jones is striving through careful planning and management to find the ideal balance between training, work and family. And she still holds on to the dream of a PB sometime in the not-too-distant future.

Jones balances the household responsibilities of a young family, the duties of a successful career with a major pharmaceutical company and the training demands of an elite athlete. Here's her advice for fitting it all into your busy life.

THE LIFE OF AN ATHLETE

We are all asking, how do I achieve a high level in more than one aspect of my life? A professional needs to perform like an athlete. I've found that my fitness level actually helps me perform better in the other parts of my life. I simply have the energy to do more.

I've seen the clock of the elite athlete who focuses only on athletics. I've never chosen to have that life and now I've decided that I don't want that anyway. I'm choosing to have these other parts of my life as well.

I spend time looking at how all the different components of my life fit together: mother, wife, career, community, athlete. I consider how all these different components are going to fit together. My job requires a certain number of hours a day. I want to spend time with my kids. I want to do all these things. All the goals in each area must be compatible for it to work. Plus, we want to have some down time and have fun as a family.

“I’ve seen the clock of the elite athlete who focuses only on athletics... I don’t want that.”



SCOTIABANK
TORONTO WATERFRONT
MARATHON STAFF

Tania Jones

BALANCING

CHOOSING TO LET SOME THINGS GO

I have made choices to maintain this complicated life. We don't spend time watching television.

I no longer race in exciting far away places. We don't travel to my races as a family as much anymore and instead focus more on Canadian races closer to home. With my first son, we traveled with him a lot in the first year. We started out saying, we're going to experience this together, now I travel to races alone.

I used to go train with a track club training group two to three times per week. Now I almost always run by myself. I don't train on a beautiful track. I train on a dirt track full of weeds because it is on my way home from work. It gets a bit lonely now. But that's one of the choices I make to be more efficient.

EVERYTHING HAS ITS CYCLE

I put an emphasis on different parts of my life at different times of the year. I call it periodization. I don't train for a marathon in the winter when there's less daylight and the cold is hard on my body. As a result, I won't be ready for a marathon in April.

Career is always intense. It doesn't have periodization. I don't have down cycles at work anymore. I can't expect to have up and down cycles. I fit other things around work.

To maintain high performance, I have found that I need to build in down time for recovery and regeneration. This has allowed me to stay competitive in the sport for over 20 years.



“It's *okay* not to be with your kids 100% of the time”

PLANNING FOR MORE THAN JUST TRAINING

You have to find some way to be strategic in each role. In our house, we're looking for simpler ways to do things. This creates time for the activities we love.

For me, this includes building the perfect team. I always search out the best expertise. My list of experts who have helped me includes physicians, therapists, chiropractors, exercise physiologists, chefs and a cleaning service.

I have to be really discerning about who's part of the team. For massage therapy, I need someone who will come to the house since I can't leave the boys.

It's also anticipating problems before they happen. That's at work, with kids, with life in general. Maintaining the car properly or having the right babysitter. The little details save time and effort in the long run.

It's also being realistic about things. I try to look realistically at life rather than attempting to meet an ideal. For example, it's okay not to be with your kids 100 per cent of the time. It's about quality time not quantity and about being a good role model. I have created my own unique vision of success.



Tania's TIPS

DUMP THE DREAMS ONTO PAPER

Take some time to reflect. Sit down with a piece of paper and map out all of your dreams. Being a good parent, being a good spouse, excelling as a professional, being fit and energetic.

LET SOME THINGS GO

You can't do it all at a high level all of the time. There's stuff you're going to have to let go. If you're going to train 12 weeks for a marathon, you're going to have to let something else go during that time. Recognize the areas where you just can't play anymore.

LOCK IT IN

Establish set times for your training (or other important activities) each week. This accommodates family commitments and ensures that the work gets done.

ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY HAPPEN

You can't count on everything going perfectly, so know what you're going to do when things go wrong. When there's snow, you can't run outside, so get a treadmill or have weights as back-up. In the case of injuries, determine your weak points and work on preventing them from becoming an injury.

➔ *How do you build a support team to help you improve as a runner and balance all your commitments? Find out more on how Tania does it. Click on iRunNation.com.*



BONUS Tip

EATING HEALTHY BY COOKING ONCE A WEEK

Nutrition for a family is so critical. And for an athlete, to be performing at your best and recovering, nutrition is essential. I'm the primary cook in the house. But I wasn't feeling like I was meeting everyone's needs. I said, "This cooking thing is not working."

I went looking for an expert who could solve the problem. A chef showed me how I could prepare five days of food at one time. With a weekly meal plan mapped out, I now cook once a week for the whole week. I grocery shop online. I cook the delivered food before I put the groceries away. The meals go into the fridge as a final cooked product. This process has completely changed my life. In a three-hour block I can prep an entire week of food.

It mentally lightens the load. I don't wake up every morning thinking, "What am I going to prep for meals today?"

We're eating better. We have a set grocery list delivered every week. Family members can choose what they feel like for dinner. If I train at night, people don't have to wait for me to arrive before they eat. We've found that we don't eat empty calories when there's good food available as soon as we get home.

➔ *For more on how Tania has conquered the modern cooking crisis and see some of her meal-preparation solutions, click on iRunNation.com*