
Life Lessons Learned Along the Way: Heroes Come in All Shapes and Sizes

We continue our series of personal, impactful stories that have shaped how we practice law.

By Brian K. Mitzel

During this global pandemic many states have implemented stay-at-home orders, like here in Michigan. I think it is safe to say that most people under a stay-at-home order have learned to appreciate things differently than they had before. For instance, healthcare workers, and others, have rightfully been identified as heroes during this trying time. I appreciate all that those workers have done during this crisis, but I have a newfound appreciation for a different hero – my wife.

My wife and I are lucky enough to have been blessed with a son who turned two years old this past March. And anyone who has had a two year old knows that they can be very sweet and loads of fun to play with. But then the adage “terrible twos” comes to fruition and you can find yourself hiding in a closet just so you can regain your composure (true story, just ask my mother-in-law).

Throughout the pendency of the stay-at-home order. I have been able to spend a lot more time at home with my family. While I am working remotely in the inaccessible corner of my basement, I do get to spend more time with my wife and our son throughout the day. Before the stay-at-home order, my wife worked three days per week and was able to care for our son on the days she didn't go to work. When I would come home, she would let me know what happened that day, and she might mention that she was tired or that today was rough. I always appreciated that she took the time from her career to care for our son. But after witnessing firsthand what staying home with our son actually entails, I have gained the utmost respect for her ability to juggle.

Gavin has never been a kid to sleep in. So my wife's day at home with him does not begin with sleeping in herself – he likes to get up around 5:00 a.m. Then there are usually a few minutes of snuggling on the couch while he drinks his morning

milk, followed by a diaper change. Next, it's time to feed him breakfast. He is a picky eater but loves mac and cheese. So why not? Mac and cheese for breakfast it is! My wife does all this before taking her first sip of coffee – a prerequisite for me to even roll out of bed.

On a typical stay-at-home day, after taking care of Gavin's morning needs, it's morning activity time. My wife usually spends the preceding evening looking for new activities and games to play with our son that are fun and that help him develop. Sometimes he enjoys a game for a long enough period of time for my wife to clean up breakfast or perform her own morning preparatory tasks. Other times, he just wants to "help" her with whatever she is doing. Regardless of whether he enjoys it for minutes or seconds, she is resilient and continues to look for new things for him to do that are fun and educational.

Before you know it, it's lunch time. Sometimes they have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, usually cut into the shape of a dinosaur or star. If my wife is lucky enough, she can sit down with Gavin and eat her lunch, too. After lunch, it might be close to nap time. Believe it or not, despite having two speeds – run and sleep – Gavin usually doesn't want to take a nap. There is way too much else that he wants to do! If he does go down for a nap, my wife might get a few minutes to herself. If not, it's time for more activities.

If it's nice outside, they might go for a walk and take our dog along with them. Gavin likes to be the one to hold the leash, so walks are not as easy and stress-relieving as you might think. But they all enjoy it regardless of the zigzagging technique that has been developed.

Soon enough I come home from work (or up from the basement in our current situation). That usually means it is time to start making dinner. We typically trade who makes dinner and who plays with Gavin. After dinner, it's time to clean up, and bath time is on the horizon.

After his bath, Gavin usually wants to play more, or he might be starting to wind down. If we play our cards right, that might mean sitting in a chair together and reading some stories. If it's not story time, he is usually still running around, with my wife hot on his heels. Once Gavin goes down for bed, my wife is usually not too far behind him. But she doesn't lie down until after she takes care of anything else she wanted to get done that day and prepares for the next day's adventures.

While we have all had to stay at home, it is important to be appreciative of all the essential workers who make it possible for us to do so. But it is also important to identify and appreciate *all* the different heroes in our lives, including those under our own roofs, who have been heroic long before we have had to stay home and who will continue to be once the stay-at-home order is lifted. In our [second article](#), Jesse Roth provides insight into Why Procedure Matters.

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