

HEALTH



How I Find Balance

Ted Leider, 60, sole practitioner, Richmond Hill, Ont.

OUR SON WAS BORN 18 YEARS AGO AND HE WAS DIAGNOSED with a serious heart defect. He had open heart surgery at 2½, and, while he was recovering, it was determined he was quite severely autistic. I wanted to stay home with him, so I quit my practice and my wife, Diana, who's also an accountant, continued working. When I started looking for services for my son, the schools didn't want him. I found four other fathers of kids in similar situations; we pooled our resources and skills and opened our own not-for-profit therapy centre called the Shining Through Centre: Educating Children with Autism. After several years, everything was working great, so I stepped back.

I slowly started getting back into accounting, but not full time, because I still needed to be home with my son — I drop him off at school, pick him up and continue to be involved in his programming. Now that my practice is moving along well, I thought, I'm not doing much for the community. That's why I decided to run for municipal council.

One way I balance everything is to ensure my clients understand that my son is a priority. I won't take clients who are demanding or expect me to meet strict deadlines. Fortunately, my clients are all very understanding.

Another way my wife and I balance our family life and enjoy everything life has to offer is by bringing our son along everywhere we can — on the subway, shopping, swimming, skiing. When he's skiing (attached to harnesses and tethers because he can't ski alone), he laughs and sings as he goes down the hills — and that's the best feeling in the world. — *As told to Wendy Haaf*

STRESS-BUSTING TIP OF THE MONTH

Avoid second-hand strife

STRESS CAN BE HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS, to the point that merely observing someone in a stressful situation can change our physiology, a German study suggests. Researchers tested 211 subjects and found that 30% showed increased production of the stress hormone cortisol while viewing others struggling with math problems through a one-way mirror, while 24% had a similar boost in cortisol by watching a video of the experiment. Even TV programs depicting the suffering of others can transmit that stress to viewers, says Veronika Engert, one of the study's authors. Something to keep in mind before binge watching *The Walking Dead*. — *Tamar Satov*



Nothing to sneeze at

IF YOUR SEASONAL ALLERGIES seem out of control, stress may be to blame. In a study conducted by The Ohio State University and published in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, allergy sufferers with more than one flare-up in symptoms not only reported higher levels of stress compared with those without symptoms during the study period, but a number also had flare-ups within a few days of experiencing increased daily stress. "While alleviating stress won't cure allergies, it may help decrease episodes of intense symptoms," says allergist Amber Patterson, lead author of the study. — *TS*