

chaos at times. I think we are like everyone else out there. We try and keep our heads above water and do the best we can.

Jo: We work as a team and are equals in everything, from how we raise our kids, our careers and finances. We discuss every detail and make every decision together. I get the morning shift of lunches and school drop-off, whereas John is the real hero as has the chaotic afternoon shift, picking up kids from school, running them to various sports and then coming home and cooking dinner. He's amazing and I could never have enjoyed a career and four kids, without his commitment to our family.

Are there any tips in having a connected household when you are both busy with careers?

John: Dinners have always been very important time for us. The TV is always turned off and just music in the background. This is the special time we have as a family where we talk about our days and what is going on in each of our lives. I love this time because, as the boys get older our conversations change as well. At times they are very deep as we hear about their opinions on everything from lifestyle, their political views and future aspirations. Our oldest son recently said to me "You know Dad, the one thing I will do when I have a family is always to have dinners together as well". Another said, "I am so thankful that you and mum allowed us to express our own opinions without judgment". I believe we live in a world where our kids are smarter than us anyway, so we need to listen and learn from them on their views of the world we live in.

Jo: I totally agree. Our dinner time around the table is my favourite part of the day! It allows us all to share our thoughts and opinions, have a good laugh and have really open and honest relationship with each other. The boys know nothing is off limits and they can talk to us about anything without judgment.

As Influencers, who have been your mentors or people you admire?

Jo: The people I admire most would have

to be my parents. They are the most kind and generous people I know and would drop whatever they are doing to help someone out, offer them a meal or give the shirt off their back. Despite having some recent health issues, they are always positive and concerned about others before themselves.

John: I really don't have any mentors, but I admire a lot of people who are mostly our friends and family. We have a varied group of friends whose company we really enjoy. I often just listen to their stories and issues going on in their lives. It makes me realise we are all in the same boat one way or another. I admire them all for overcoming their own obstacles in life and learning from them.

What is the most challenging aspect of your work and maintaining a great relationship?

Jo: The unconventional hours and the frequent weekends away are probably the most challenging. We maintain our relationship simply by talking. We tell each other everything, text several times a day with little messages just to say we're thinking of each other. We maintain a truly open relationship. We have no secrets from each other at all.

What's the best advice you've ever received about relationships and who did it come from?

John: My mum gave me the best advice to "Be a gentleman and be respectful".

Jo: My parents taught me to "Be kind" and "Don't judge until you've walked in someone else's shoes".

Technology continues to entertain and challenge couples. Have you noticed any other testing trends as we surge on into 2018?

Jo: With a houseful of boys, gadgets have certainly invaded our home. I can't think of anything else that has had such an impact in our lifetime.

How do you unwind and separate work from your personal life?

Jo: I try not to bring work home. If I need to, I'll have a quick discussion over dinner with the family or with John after the kids



Relationship counsellor Joanne Wilson with Jo Desmond and John Smeaton. PHOTO: JOHN MCCUTCHEON

are in bed and then just try to let it go. I also have a great group of friends that are fabulous sounding boards. As I've become older, I've learnt not to "sweat the small stuff". I take my dog Ollie on a long beach walk each day, just being at one with your surroundings is a good leveller as to what is important in life.

John: I love to be around the ocean, so I have taken up surfing. It's the best way to de-stress and let all your worries go. I meet up with a group of guys at the Bluff each weekend. We chat, surf and laugh. All the worries melt away. Jo and I also always talk about our issues with work. We discuss it and then move on. I love that I can talk with Jo about anything and everything.

What is your favourite romantic: - Destination - Food - Gesture - Date idea

Jo: I dream of returning to France sometime soon; ripe tomatoes, avocados and chocolate; I love it when John texts me to say he's thinking of me. My favourite date would be dinner and a movie or our weekend walks on the beach.

John: Paris, lamb roast (not with Tom Cruise though). A kiss from my wife, dinner and relaxing on the deck!

15. John, what do you appreciate about Joanne the most?

Her unconditional love for the boys and I.

16. Joanne, what do you appreciate about John the most?

Everything! I adore him. He's kind, completely supportive, gives great advice, affectionate, a great Dad and my best friend. He lets me be "me"!

Don't underestimate the long-term benefits of eating as a family around the table. For ideas and great conversation starters, head to my website or www.backtothetable.org.au. Listen in each Friday morning to radio Salt 106.5 for my fun weekly chat on this series with the breakfast team.

ABOUT JOANNE WILSON

Joanne is a neuro-psychotherapist and relationship specialist at The Confidante Counselling. Email jo@theconfidantecounselling.com or visit www.theconfidantecounselling.com.

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P: 5438 8828
 Suite 4&5/70 Nicklin Way,
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www.awci.com.au
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