From a medical student- made mother. Advice on managing babies and books:

To my fellow mothers in medical school,

Whether your children are in school, are newborns, in their terrible twos or somewhere in between, I hope this letter brings you encouragement and comfort in knowing that you are not alone.

Being a mother is a full time job. Being a medical student is also a full time job. I really struggled with trying to find a good balance and to be quite honest I still struggle at times. In case no one has told you, let me be the one to assure you, it is possible to be both a mom and a medical student. But, please keep in mind, I said possible, not fun.

You are likely to experience feelings of guilt and inadequacy because of the time you may have to sacrifice with your family due to school. This is one of my biggest struggles. For me, not only was I a medical student and a mom – but also I was a first time mom with a gorgeous newborn baby that I had no idea what to do with. Although medical school was a whole new world, I knew how to be a student because that's all I had ever done, but I was brand new at this mom thing. It was scary facing the stacks of notes and powerpoints, and at the same time feeding, changing and comforting a baby. But, we all survived, and you and your family will too! You made it this far for a reason – you are goal-oriented and determined.

The next few years will be an incredible journey, and I wanted to pass along a few of the things that really helped me survive medical school and motherhood.

1. **Find yourself a good support system.** Whether it’s your spouse, your mother, your friends or a combination of it all, a good support system is 100% necessary to survival. You need to surround yourself with people who are positive and who support and encourage you. The next four years may very well be the hardest that you have endured or will endure in your life, and you need to know that when you need to talk, there is always an ear to listen or a shoulder to cry on.

2. **A good baby sitter.** Even if you have a great support system, you still need a great baby sitter, nanny, family friend, etc that can help with your child. It is really important that you have someone you can trust to not only provide childcare but also to be flexible and show up on time. It is so much easier to focus on your school when you don’t have to worry about your child being fed and loved, or always scrambling to find help because your spouse has to be at work and your baby sitter bailed at the last minute.

3. **It’s okay to ask for help.** This is another big struggle that I face. If you are anything like me, you have made it this far by being independent. I didn’t want to inconvenience anyone by asking for help because my friends have their own lives and my classmates have to study too. These things are all true, however, asking for help because you are overwhelmed and 10 seconds from a nervous breakdown is totally different from asking for help and using people because you are tired of changing dirty diapers. Lesson
learned the hard way for me, but now you know that it is totally okay to say, "Hey, can anyone hold this colicky baby that’s been screaming in my ear for 3 hours so I can read my notes?"

4. **Make time for mommy time.** This is something that I didn’t do nearly often enough. You need time to do something that you enjoy with no interruptions. It is extremely important for your mental health. You can’t be a stellar mom and a P1 medical student if you never have time to relax. It doesn’t matter if it is a 10-minute bubble bath once a week, an extra long run on the weekends, or going to the grocery store by yourself. Be selfish for once and take a little time for you.

5. **Don’t compare yourself to other moms.** Comparing yourself to other mothers is a step in the direction of disaster. Even if there are other mothers in your class, they aren’t you. Each is fighting her own battle, and no one mother has the same situation. Save yourself the battle with your self-esteem and don’t go there. Ever.

I wish you the best luck with your new adventure in the land of textbooks and diapers. It’s a long journey with late nights, early mornings and endless worries that you child has [insert terrible disease that you just read about here], but at the end of the day always remember that the sacrifices you make now will lead to a great future for you and your family.