

WAH Moms & WAH Dads Podcast Episode # 2

Deborah Carney and Jennifer Fromke

Deborah: Hi everyone, and welcome to another episode of the Work at Home Moms and Work at Home Dads podcast. I am Deborah Carney, your host. Today I have with me an accomplished author and a work at home mom, Jennifer Fromke.



Hi Jennifer, how are you doing?

Jennifer: I'm great. How are you?

Deborah: I'm doing well. The temperature finally went down in New York City so I'm happy. We've had a string of 90 and 100 degree days here.

Jennifer, I found you when I was doing some author podcasts and realized that you are a work at home mom. I would love for you to introduce yourself to our listeners and tell them a little bit about your story.

Jennifer: Okay, great. My name is Jennifer Fromke. I am a wife to a wonderful man and a mother to three incredible kids. I am a new author. I have been writing for three to four years now. My first book was just published this spring. It's been a really fun ride figuring how to actually have a full-time job when I really didn't think I was working.

Deborah: Yes, you have to cross that line from being the "Yes, I'm just writing for fun" to the "No, this is a job and you need to give me some personal space to be able to write." How did that work out? Your kids would have been relatively young, right? What are the ages of your kids?

Jennifer: My kids are 12, 14, and 15 now. I guess that's it's been about three or four years that I started to write. Really, I did start on a very part-time basis. I was writing whenever I had a couple of spare moments.

My family has been incredibly supportive. The kids have been so great. If I tell them that I need to write, they really get that. They have been just excited as me with this whole thing coming out. Seeing an actual book in print on the countertop has been really fun.

They have been really helpful which has eased the whole process but at first it was a challenge.

Deborah: They were used to Mom just being there for them all day.

Jennifer: Right. Once it got to the point where they were in school all day, there was time for me. There was time to kill so I did get to start working. It was not until I actually got my book contract that I said, “Oh, now I have deadlines.”

I really needed to make those deadlines. I needed to have a plan as far as how much I could write by the deadline. That was the big challenge and it really worked out fantastically, I have to say. I’ve learned to write at many places and at many times.

Deborah: Let’s walk through a typical day. You get up and you get the kids up and off to school.

Jennifer: Exactly. I get them off to school and then I come home. Usually I have about 30 to 40 minutes of putting the house back together and all that kind of stuff, and I get myself together. Then I try to sit down for about two to three hours depending on what else has to happen and who needs to go to the orthodontist and all that.

If I can get a good, solid two to three hours in the morning, I’m really doing well. I usually use the afternoon for my errands and house stuff that I have to get done. Some days I’m able to write two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon. Those are really good days. Usually, there are just so many other responsibilities that I have. I try to protect my morning.

Deborah: That’s really good. As a work at home mom, one of the challenges would be that family and friends know you’re home.

Jennifer: Exactly.

Deborah: They decide to just drop by. Have you been able to train people over the past couple of years to leave you alone in the morning?

Jennifer: Yes, definitely. I don’t answer the phone. If I am in the middle of something, I just let it go. I pick up for my husband and I pick up for school or the kids. Other than that, people know that if I don’t answer, I am either writing or forgot my phone again, which I do often.

Deborah: Guilty. I used to have my phone surgically implanted in my hand. Now, we’ll call it to find where it is.

What are the challenges that you have in the afternoons? Is it that the kids have to go places and do things? You were telling me a story about how you have been able to capitalize on that.

Jennifer: I try to do that. If I can get some time in the morning then my story is in my head. I think, "All right, this is what my character needs to do next." I can constantly keep that in the back of my mind, just soaking on what is happening in my story.

I take my laptop with me everywhere I go. When I am at the orthodontist and I have 30 minutes I can sit down and start typing on that scene that I started in the morning. If I have to take my daughter to the barn for horseback riding lessons, sometimes it is just easier for me to stay there. I can sit in the car and write for an hour.

I try to work where I am. If I know that I am going to be sitting somewhere, I used to take a book along. I am a voracious reader and I love to read. Now I think, "Well, if I can write, it's better than reading." It is accomplishing something that needs to get done.

Deborah: I think that's a great talent to have, to be able to pick up where you left off and keep going. Even as a reader, that is one of those things that you might not want to do a half hour at a time. You are writing all the time. You want to just sit down at home in your La-Z Boy or your coach, snuggle up, read for two hours straight and not have it be chopped up between doctor's appointments and horseback riding lessons.

I think it is a brilliant use of time that you can take your laptop everywhere. People usually laugh at me when I bring mine everywhere. Then I bring my microphone everywhere.

Every time I plan to do something they say, "You're not bringing the Yeti with you." I say, "Yes, you never know. There might be an opportunity for an interview." "No."

Jennifer: Exactly. That's what I think. If I have time I would hate to be sitting there doing nothing. I don't want to play games on my phone if I can do something worthwhile. For me, it's either read or write. When I am trying to finish something, I am trying to write a book, I have to get it done. I choose write as much as I can.

Deborah: I'm sure it helps you with your characters to be able to keep going and going. A lot of writers will say that when the flow is going, you have to

capture it. That way, there is less chance for writer's block. You are keeping yourself going.

Jennifer: I find that if I can just write a little bit a day, every day, it keeps my story fresh. If I leave my story for three or four days and I'm not even thinking about the characters, it takes me so much longer to get back to where I was.

A lot of times, if it's been three or four days, I have to sit and read several scenes that I've written so I can remember where I've been and where it's going. If it's in my head every day at least a little bit, it is still fresh and I can pick up where I leave off. That's what I try to do, keep it fresh.

Deborah: You said that your kids are very supportive. That's great. I assume that your husband is pretty supportive?

Jennifer: He's great. If he has a day off then he'll just take care of everything and give me time to write which is amazing. It's such a gift. He knows when I need to have some writing time and he will pitch in. He does the laundry. I'll tell you what, that is the biggest gift I can think of.

Deborah: I love a man that does the laundry. I'm glad that he appreciates that you are actually working. I think that one of the biggest challenges for work and home moms, as I said before, is that people don't respect their time as being at work.

They think that you're home so they can come over, call, invite you to lunch and interrupt your day. You have set some really clear guidelines for people. The benefits, obviously, are that you are available to your family when you need to be available.

Jennifer: Right, and that is what's number one for me. I will drop my laptop in a second if my kids need me, if I need to be somewhere, they need to be somewhere or if we need to talk. I really try to be available. I really do. That is a wonderful thing about being able to work at home.

Yes, sometimes friends don't always understand. I've had to tell people, "Look, I am allowed to have one fun thing a week. I can do one lunch or coffee date a week with a friend." I'm booked up for a couple of weeks sometimes. When my friend wants to get together with me I say, "I can meet you in a month."

I hate saying that but if I start doing that more than once a week, I lose time and I just can't afford to do that.

Deborah: You know, it's really funny because my boyfriend has been looking at my schedule. He says, "Do I have to go to Tungle.me and sign up for some time with you?"

Jennifer: That's a good idea.

Deborah: "Can you schedule me in there at some point?"

It just affords you so much flexibility. If you want to take a family vacation, you don't have to tell a boss that you need a few days off. You are the boss.

Before you started your novel, did you work full-time or were you already a stay at home mom?

Jennifer: I was a stay at home mom and I never planned to work until maybe after they were gone. I didn't really plan it. I just started playing around with a story and then I started writing more and more.

Then I realized that I was going to try to sell it. It became more and more work and more time spent online talking to editors, agents, going to conferences and really learning the business.

Then all of a sudden, I was telling someone I was a stay at home mom. My husband looked at me and said, "You're a writer. You have a job." I said, "Wow, I do have a job." I just eased into it. I didn't really think of it as becoming employed because obviously, I wasn't making any money.

Deborah: You're not working for someone.

Jennifer: Exactly. It was hobby time that just became a ginormous hobby. Then once my husband was referring to that as my job, I started taking myself seriously. I backed into work. I never planned to work while I had kids at home but this is actually the ideal way to do it.

Deborah: That's what happens with a lot of creative people. I was a stay at home mom. I was a photographer. I got into wedding photography because I could do it on the weekends. During the rest of the week it was family time, or while they were at school I processed photos and did whatever I had to do.

Basically, it was just being able to go out on weekends. At the time, I didn't have to get a job. In today's economy, forget it. Everyone in the house that is over 16 has to have a job. When you are a creative person like you are,

it just comes out. You realize that you've made the crossover from it being a hobby to being a professional.

Jennifer: It's a blessing, I must say, doing what I love and getting paid for it. Wow.

Deborah: How great is that? Have you ever done things like short stories or anything or did you just jump right into the novel?

Jennifer: I did do a couple of short stories. I self-published one of them as digital-only. That story is called *Special Delivery*. It was kind of a fun little side thing that I did. My publisher was going to be promoting all these different authors and she said, "Hey, do you have anything you could throw out there on KDP? I said, "Well, I can try."

I didn't know what I was doing but it was also a good trial run for the marketing before my novel came out. I did throw that up there and I have gotten some good responses from it. It's just a short Christmas story but it was a great way to learn the ins and outs of publishing from a self-publishing, digital-only point of view.

Then it made me really appreciate my publisher a lot when I didn't have to do all of that.

Deborah: Nice. Again, that comes from not working for someone else and having the flexibility to do what you want. For women who are maybe working a full-time job and might be thinking about becoming a work at home mom, what advice would you give them?

Jennifer: It really depends on your situation. If you need a certain dollar amount every month, there is a way to do that while you're writing. I heard a great class from a guy named Chip MacGregor. He is a literary agent and is a genius when it comes to publishing. Once you start writing a couple of articles and getting them published you realize, "Okay, I get \$20 for an article in that magazine and \$30 for this kind of work."

He would map out on his three-month calendar when he was getting paid for what sorts of writing jobs. He would accept jobs according to when the pay comes in. It was fascinating to see how he planned it so that he could count on a normal income and make money writing.

It doesn't take a brain surgeon to do it. It's not really that complicated. I would say that if you want to work at home, just start something on the side. Don't quit your job today and decide to start writing tomorrow.

Writing is a great skill that can be learned. If you know the alphabet and you know how to put words together, you can learn how to write. There are certain skills that you can learn from online classes, a lot of which are free. If you apply yourself, you can get published. I'm not saying you're going to get a great, big novel published next week but you can start with an article here.

You can start with little things online here and there and then you start moving up to the higher pay grades. Before you know it, you have a platform and a reader audience who looks for your byline.

Then when you are ready to write that big novel, you already have people who want to read what you've written. It's a slow building kind of business.

I've been in the business for three to four years. I was a baby then and I am only a toddler now. I am learning as I go. It's a very fun business for me because I love words and that is just what I do.

Deborah: You gave very good advice about just starting something part-time on the side. I know that if you are a mom with a full-time job, that sounds daunting, but if you can set an hour a night aside for yourself after your kids go to bed and get your husband or significant other to allow you to have an hour to yourself, you can concentrate on writing, photography, crafting or whatever it is.

Figure out what it is you can do from home and then let it grow and blossom. Like Jennifer said, you don't have to jump right in and say, "I am going to quit my job, give up my benefits and be a work at home mom because I can't take it anymore." If you have a job in this economy, keep it for a while.

Jennifer: I would also say that if you are thinking about making a move like that, don't try to do something that you are not excited about. You have to find out what your deep passion is and pursue that because that is what is going to be most rewarding for you.

Pursue whatever you are passionate about. Write about what you're passionate about or do crafting, like you said. Whatever you are passionate about, make sure that you are going to love this stay at home job. You can do a drudgery nine to five, get to the office and then get home and not be happy. If you're working at home, you're surrounded by your family and you hate what you're doing, it can be worse.

Deborah: Yes, that's going to be worse. That's a very good point. If you're crabby, everyone's crabby. We all know that whatever mood mom is in, that's how the rest of the family goes.

Jennifer, I want to thank you so much for taking time to be on our Work At Home Moms podcast. It's a fairly new podcast now. I'm really excited to be able to talk to folks like you who have carved out a way to balance work and home life and have it be the ideal situation, especially knowing that you started as a stay at home mom.

There are a lot of moms that start out as a stay at home mom. Then as their kids get older, they feel like they should be doing something. If you can find that something that you're passionate about, that you can actually make money at too, you have hit a homerun.

Jennifer, where can people find you on the Internet?

Jennifer: They can find me at my website which is www.JenniferFromke.com. I am also on Facebook, Jennifer Fromke and Twitter, [@jenniferfromke](https://twitter.com/jenniferfromke).

Deborah: That's awesome. Again, thank you so much. I want to thank our podcast hosts, GeekCast.fm. You will be able to listen to this podcast and see the show notes on both ItsaWAHMThing.com and over at GeekCast.fm. It will also be available on CoolFamilySites.com.

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Once again, thank you for listening. Jennifer, you've been a great guest. Thank you so much. Everyone, keep keeping on and have a great day.

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This site was founded with the hope that collectively we could help other moms find that same success. Be it earning enough to take a great vacation every summer or running a powerhouse company that takes no prisoners – whatever that goal is, we have moms contributing here that have achieved it.

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