

LAURA BENNETT

SIX

Is A Lucky Number

If you're a *Project Runway* fan, you'll remember season three's Laura Bennett, a fiery and opinionated redhead who was always impeccably dressed. As one of the final four, Laura, 45, announced during taping that she was pregnant with - count 'em - her sixth baby.

BY LISA ARCELLA

The New Orleans native, who now lives in a Manhattan loft, says the show completely changed her career. She now has, among her many projects, a hot new line sold on QVC. To make life more challenging, she and architect husband Peter Shelton, are parenting Cleo, 19, (from a former marriage) and sons Peik, 12, Truman, 9, Pearson, 5, Larson, 4, and Finn, 1. "Finn is short for finished, which I am...I think," she laughs. And even though she is thrilled with the business opportunities she has had, she says being a mom is the one job she values most.

Toy Box: Your life sounds crazy! How do you handle it all?

Laura: On a wing and a prayer! No, actually I am very, very busy, but organized. I have narrowed it down to a few projects, but large and encompassing ones.

Toy Box: How does anyone have time to be fabulous with six kids?

Laura: Part of it is illusion, but I also take time every morning to get dressed. It's so easy not to do that when you are a busy mom. But if I take those 15 minutes I feel better all day long. Women prioritize everyone else in their family and put themselves last. But if I take time for myself it can only be good. In the long run it makes everyone in my family happy because I am happy.

Toy Box: Do you have a team of people helping you every day?

Laura: I have two girls that help me. One has been with me for 12 years. If my kids wake up crying they usually call for Alicia. She comes in the morning and another girl helps me in the afternoon to bathe everyone. We powwow and

figure out the logistics every day. It's all about the logistics. I also have a great husband. Sometimes we aren't on time or not at every practice and we get a lot of slack from our friends. If I am in a meeting and it's running over, I will call one of the other moms and ask if she could pick up my son. I am not afraid to ask for help and I think that's really important. Women tend to get stressed out trying to handle everything by themselves. But who are you really trying to impress? I think a lot of women don't ask their husbands for enough help. Sometimes it's perceived that what they do is more important than what women do at home and that just isn't true. My husband is so great at helping me and I would encourage other husbands to do the same.

Toy Box: Most people couldn't imagine managing five little boys in a New York City apartment.

Laura: We have a large space by Manhattan standards and we go out of town to a house we have in the Berkshires on the weekends to let them run around. During the school week they are so busy it's fine to be in the city.

Toy Box: Ever have 'mommy guilt' about working so much?

Laura: As a parent, I think that it's great for my kids to see that I am taking advantages of all these opportunities. They have a healthy, successful role model. I love the idea that more moms are starting businesses and doing things for themselves. Women are amazing. Men could never handle all of the things that women do. It never gets easier, but women keep doing it and take whatever comes. We need to do a good job as parents, but also have to be responsible to ourselves and live our lives to their fullest potential. ■

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