

# The Daddy Dinosaur & his **NINE MONTH OLD**

Combining fatherhood and a career is never simple and in this article, Voiceover Artist Alan Shires, masters the art of how to be in more than one place at the same time!

I love the phrase “keeping all the plates spinning,” it always paints this glorious image in my mind of someone dressed in black and white, balancing on a unicycle, juggling fire-lit maracas whilst someone next to him runs back and forth keeping a dozen large plates spinning on very tall yet narrow sticks. This is super entertaining to watch, right? You are sitting on the edge of your seat waiting for something to go wrong, can you imagine the first time one of these performers did these tricks? Wow stress alert or what?

Whether you are a voiceover artist, actor, dancer, singer or some other form of performer I think the phrase “keeping all the plates spinning” is true, but not totally apt! In fact, I would say it's more like keeping all the plates spinning while blindfolded with one arm tied behind your

back and keeping a gang of hungry alligators at bay with what seems like the whole world watching you. That's a little more fitting, right?

In April and May 2021, I ticked off two huge tasks on my bucket list. The first was to voice some kid's toys, the second was to attend an audition with my 9-month-old daughter, Grace. Let me tell you, the planning was no walk in the park! If anything it was more like that plate spinning scenario we can all laugh at above! Let's explore the two events separately and then, at the end, I promise you I will leave you with a sneaky top tip!

It all began when an email arrived into my inbox inviting me to go to a studio in Manchester the following week. Not much else was said at this point aside from a brief overview of the job and the fee. At the time I was



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feeling excited, learning the job was to voice a children's toy figure and it was my first session back in a studio since the pandemic hit so there was plenty to look forward to. Days go by, and the session is fast approaching, but no time has been allotted yet and all of a sudden the phone rings. Another client wants to book me for an on-screen commercial shoot on the same day as this toy gig. Uh oh, stress alert! What am I to do? The screen gig needs the answer now so I say yes but tell them I am only free at 1pm (aware I needed to allot half the day to the toy client). Fortunately, they only needed me for 2-3 hours so I figured I could make it work. The TV job accepts my 1pm arrival and now I have to convince the toy booking to see me in the morning. I ring

them up and yes, fortunately, they can see me at 9am allowing me 2 hours to do the session. Phew everything seems to be going smoothly at this point!

Fast-forward to the first session; I arrive and learn that it is not just a VO job but a facial recognition job and sadly the software is broken. The session starts at 10am (one hour late) but I am not worried because my next session is only 20 minutes away (how lucky is that?) It gets to 12pm and they tell me they need me for an extra hour as there are more characters to do... Trying not to feel stressed, I think about how I can make this work! After having so much fun I tell them I can be back for 4pm and can record till 5pm and I dash off to my on-screen gig where upon arrival, they tell me they are running an hour behind. Still at this point I try not to feel stressed while feeling deeply amused that I could have stayed at the toy voiceover session after all! Fortunately, we wrapped at 3:30 pm and I was able to get back just in time to pick up the last character for the toy voiceover job. In the space of five hours, I filmed an on-screen commercial and voiced a golden retriever, a pig, a sloth, a lion cub and a T-Rex. I got paid an extra hour and had LOADS OF FUN!

**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!**

Two weeks later my agent calls and asks how old my daughter is - nine months, I tell her. She then asks me if I can attend an audition with her in London to which I agree. I smile as I organise the plans but secretly I am now in need of swimming lessons for the large pool of sweat my nerves have just produced. Nine-month-olds DO NOT like to sit still (I don't blame them, neither do I). London is over 200 miles away and the idea of going across the country, dealing with the tube and then doing an audition with a baby certainly made me feel like I was juggling with fire whilst on a unicycle. Anyway, my wife Molly decided to come along and we made a nice family day of it. Sadly, Grace and I did not book the job, they decided to go with a baby boy instead, but she adored the journey, she adored all the attention and we had so much fun playing together.

**MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!**

I promised a nugget of wisdom right? Well, here we go. I'll give it a try.

The idea of achieving your goal is harder in your own mind than it is in actual practice. In both of these instances, I was concerned about the timings, the distances and the performances but in reality, I had more fun than I can ever remember. I ticked two huge goals from my bucket list. I got to enjoy time working with my daughter and spending time together as a family and in a day's work, I got to be a dog, a pig, a sloth, a lion and a T-Rex! What a wild couple of weeks! But I would not have it any other way. Success is measured by perspective.

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What one person deems as success won't be aligned with another person's perspective of success. Is being a millionaire successful? A billionaire might not agree. My point is that things we really want don't just come to us on a plate; we really do have to work for it. We have to balance on a unicycle whilst juggling fire but do that long enough and you become a pro at it like those circus performers we mentioned earlier. The first go might seem hard and hey you might even slip up along the way, but YOU WILL GET THERE, enjoy the process and have fun.

Hang in there folks, your dreams await you!

