

Back to work after baby? Your own misgivings, which may include guilt and even grief at the separation, can make this a very difficult step for both of you.

Going Back to Work



Making the decision of whether or not to go back to work after having the baby can be an agonizing one. Whatever their intentions, some mothers eventually decide not to go back to work. Commonly, this happens when the mother's only option is to go back to full-time work, and the money involved is not critical.

"I hadn't expected to find motherhood so fulfilling," says Laura, who was 40 when her first child was born. "I feel very lucky that I didn't have to go back to my job. This is my full-time job, the most important one there is. It would be crazy for me to be paying someone else to do what really matters while I'm out there pushing around pieces of paper."

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The financial equation can be important. "I worked out what going back to work was going to bring in after I'd paid for child care, fares and lunches, and after I'd paid taxes. It wasn't worth it," says one mother who considered going back to teaching. "I decided to wait until the children were in school." Other families are not in such a fortunate position. Carol found that working part-time in a boutique, after childcare and other expenses were accounted for, brought in fifty dollars a week. Her husband had a low-income job and this money made all the difference. "People would say to



Studies show that the "typical stay-at-home mom" is working 91 hours a week; which is why they suggest that a working mom also deserves \$85K a year for the 50 hours a week she's at home.

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me, 'Why do you do this? It isn't worth it for fifty dollars.' And I would say, 'Of course it's worth it. With that fifty dollars I pay for the week's groceries.'"

Other women work because they cannot risk losing their job and they fear new opportunities won't be waiting for them in a few years' time. This is particularly true in times of high unemployment. "I knew the children would become more expensive. So, although we could afford for me not to work now, that might not be true in five years. I wasn't confident I would get a job after I'd been away for a few years. People would have forgotten who I was."

It's true: Women who choose not to work may find it isn't easy to get a job when they try to go back. "The women I knew who hadn't had children were in management positions. Now there were all these younger people coming in below me and at the level I'd been when I left. I realized they didn't want people with my age and experience in these jobs, they wanted youth. I realized it was going to be much more difficult to get back into work than I had originally thought."

