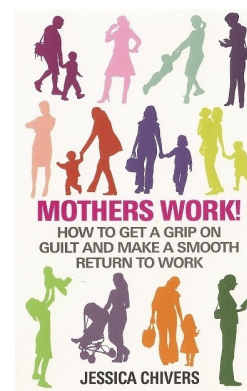


8 Mums Mantras for Making a Smooth Return to Work

1. Know your ideal scenario

Knowing what you want is the first step in getting there. In answering these questions you'll get a fuller insight into exactly what your ideal work scenario is. In **chapter one** of *Mothers Work!* there are lots of ideas to help you work these questions out: 1) What is my motivation for returning to work? 2) Do I want to return to my 'old' job or get a new one? 3) What hours do I want to work and when? 4) When do I want to return to work? **Small tip, significant impact:** Write your answers down and keep them handy for reference when you're job hunting or talking to your boss about your return-to-work preferences.



2. Stay in touch and ask for what you want

Women who stay in touch with their team (or people in their wider industry if they're not returning to the same job) tend to feel more confident about returning to work. With this confidence comes a greater ease at making flexible working and other requests. **Small tip, significant impact:** Make a case for flexible working that takes account of likely objections by your boss and other team members. There's more on how to ask for what you want, including flexible work, in **chapter 2** of *Mothers Work!*

3. See your family as a team

The family-as-team mindset starts with recognition that there needs to be a shift in the way we view ourselves and our role within the family. Unless you believe you are *Wonder Woman* (capable of throwing a part or full time job into the domestic mix with no apparent side effects) you need to garner the support of friends and family to help you make a smooth return. There's loads of advice on how to do this in **chapter 3** of *Mothers Work!* **Small tip, significant impact:** Make a list of everyone around you who could potentially help and one thing they could do.

4. Find childcare that fits your family

Every mother has an opinion on childcare and what matters is making a selection that's right for your family's needs. A good selection process is to canvass opinion from local mums and then check out a variety of different recommendations with an open mind. In **chapter 4** of *Mothers Work!* there's a list of essential questions tailored to whether you're talking to a nursery, nanny or childminder. **Small tip, significant impact:** Go with your gut feel when you choose your childcare provider: if you're happy, chances are your child will be.

5. Get a grip on guilt

Guilt can be a good barometer of whether the decisions we make are good for us and our families. Guilt can be the voice that makes us stop and question our motives and change our ways for the better. We need to ask ourselves *“is this guilt that I’m feeling reshaping my feelings and actions for the better or is it pointless and destructive?”* **Chapter 5 of *Mothers Work!*** Contains more than 50 ideas on how to grip the different kinds of guilt working mums feel. **Small tip, significant impact:** Concentrate on doing what you think is right and you’ll have no space left for guilt-inducing comparisons with other mums.

6. Go for ‘good enough’ at home

The good enough mindset is really about being comfortable with not doing something to the best of your ability but to a *sufficient* level. What is *good enough* or *sufficient* to you may be over the top or not enough to someone else and many women say it doesn’t come naturally to them. In **chapter 6 of *Mothers Work!*** Sarah says she’s getting there though: *“I hate the good enough mind set as I was fastidious about domestic chores before children. I think you have to eventually accept it otherwise you would go mad. I would much rather spend time with my daughter than clean plus with a toddler everything in the house gets messy very quickly.”* **Small tip, significant impact:** Ditch ironing kids clothes and if you can afford a weekly take away but not a cleaner, ditch the curry and hire Carol instead.

7. Prepare for a smooth return

No one likes a doom-mongering know-it-all but whichever one spouted ‘she who fails to prepare, prepares to fail’ was onto something. Along with the words *cleaner* and *not guilty*, ‘get organised’ features heavily in the vocabulary of working mums and so it is that the mantra for **chapter 7 of *Mothers Work!*** is *prepare for a smooth return*. Written in a timeline format you can dip in and out as d-day draws nearer and check off tasks for that week or day. **Small tip, significant impact:** Buy a week-to-view paper diary and instead of using it as a diary, write down to-do lists ahead of time on the relevant week.

8. Do what it takes to thrive

“Thriving” might seem like an impossibly big aspiration, but not if you keep your inner perfectionist locked up. The secret is not to expect every day to feel like a thriving sort of a day. ‘Survival’ days are all part of life’s rich tapestry and so long as you’re having more on-top than on the floor kind of days then you’re doing it. Along with uncovering the secrets to getting more me-time and sleep-time in **chapter 8 of *Mothers Work!*** you’ll discover how to keep your family together, the relationship with your partner strong and your work life satisfying. **Small tip, significant impact:** If you do nothing else to treat yourself every day, always take your book/iphone to the toilet and lock the family out.