

THE TOP

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TIPS FOR MUMS RETURNING TO WORK

CONTEMPLATE CHANGE

1 Re-evaluate whether to return to the same job or a new one. This comes down to what the new priorities are and whether what is expected in the existing role can be delivered, or if a new start is a better way to manage family life.

KNOW YOUR NEEDS

2 Identify personal, professional and financial needs and make a plan to meet them. Reflect on the new priorities as a mum.

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF YOURSELF

3 Balancing new priorities will take time and there is no right or wrong path. Pressure of juggling a child's needs and work demands can take a toll on a mum's personal and work life.

SAY 'NO'

4 Be realistic about time constraints by learning to say "no" more and switching off from work at home. Agreeing to every request from the employer, colleagues or clients is ineffective.

SCHEDULE 'ME' TIME

5 Once the leap of returning to work has been taken, get back into a routine, but ensure it includes "me time" to regroup and recharge.

SOURCE: WORKPLACE HAPPINESS CONSULTANCY RISE

WORKPLACE ISSUES

TIME TO SWITCH ROLES



FLEXIBILITY: Kristie Taylor changed jobs after having her son.

Your employer may not fit in with the new family, writes Melanie Burgess

WOMEN returning to work after having a child should not be afraid to keep their options open if they feel their employer is no longer a match.

Employers often are eager to hire female staff and offer conditions, policies or a company culture more suitable to a mum's new situation.

About 13 per cent of women with a child under the age of two who were employed during pregnancy return to work after maternity leave with a new employer, Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows.

Corporate Diversity Partners founder and chief executive Jeromine Alpe says new mothers should choose a workplace in which they feel valued, supported, comfortable and confident, and in an industry they are passionate about.

She recommends looking out for specific policies, such as: WORKPLACE flexibility that supports

job-sharing, condensed work-weeks, and flexible start/finish times; PAID parental leave programs; EQUAL pay for men and women in the same role; and PROFESSIONAL development opportunities to learn new skills, work on special projects, attend networking events, and access mentors.

"Many organisations spend time during interviews talking about their company strategies and policies but that does not mean they are taking action," Alpe says.

"Visit the company's website and LinkedIn company page (to look for) the great initiatives they have in place for their female staff members."

Jobseekers can also read SEEK Company Reviews, in which employees rate factors such as work/life balance and equal opportunity.

SEEK research reveals women, whether they are mothers or not, typically place more importance on work/life balance than men.

The ability to work part time is considered a must for 16.4 per cent of women yet just 5.1 per cent of men.

About twice as many women as men value the ability to take unpaid leave (16 per cent versus 8.5 per cent) and work close to home (20.3 per cent versus 11.7 per cent).

FINDING BALANCE
PART-TIME JOB AN ADVANTAGE

WHEN Kristie Taylor left work to have her son Evan, she planned to be back there in nine months.

It was a year, however, before she felt ready to return to her career.

"You don't have any idea, really, the love you will have for another human being before you are in it," she says.

"For me, the most important thing was coming back to a job that offered flexibility so I chose to come back part-time."

Six months after returning from ma-

ternity leave, she decided to change employers, and now works four days a week as head of marketing at Rise.

"Rise is a big advocate of work/life balance," she says.

"It has released so much stress and pressure knowing they understand that you don't need to be in the office to do a good job - a lot of things are virtual and you can work from anywhere."

"I am a single parent so it really does help having an employer that is not looking at the clock."

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

email questions to
careers_qs@news.com.au



I STILL GET ASKED FOR MY AGE - EVEN BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS! - DESPITE IT BEING OUTLAWED. WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT THAT?



LISA MORRIS
SENIOR REGIONAL DIRECTOR,
HAYS

You could politely point out that asking about a candidate's age in a job interview is illegal. You could say that your age is irrelevant to your ability to succeed in the job. Or that you don't feel comfortable answering the question but you are prepared to share details of your experience and skills that will help to determine if you are the best person for the job. For more, visit the Australian Human Rights Commission website.



JUSTIN HINORA
EXECUTIVE CONSULTANT,
HENDER CONSULTING

The Australian Human Rights Commission website is a great resource that covers a range of topics including age discrimination, and explains the Age Discrimination Act in more detail. People who experience direct or indirect discrimination can complain to the Commission. Fortunately, from a recruiters perspective, we are seeing age discrimination - against either younger or older people - become less prevalent.



ALISON SURJAN
DIRECTOR OF CONSULTING
SERVICES, MORTON PHILIPS

If you feel that you are being discriminated against, you have rights and this treatment can be reported formally through the correct channels. This may be a historic question entrenched in a severely outdated process that quite urgently needs to be reviewed. Speak to the correct person and always put these concerns in writing. It's generally not the person asking the question who is responsible for the question being asked itself.



ALEXANDRA ROSSER
HEAD OF ORGANISATIONAL
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You should respond with: "I am keen to know why you have asked me about my age; if you could explain how this is relevant to my ability to perform this job, I will be better able to provide an appropriate response". If the employer has erred or does not realise the law, they will reframe the question. If not, you may make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission.