

Meet the EXPERT



M&B' panellist **Sonali Shivtani** is an Internationally Certified Pregnancy Consultant and a child nutrition counsellor. She is the executive director of CAPPA India, and also trains aspiring birth professionals to achieve certification in pregnancy, birth and lactation counselling.

Getting back to work post maternity leave



Pregnancy is an amazing phase and of course you lose your heart to your little baby. But you may be considering going back to work for a variety of reasons. First is, of course, your own career, a sense of achievement and the feeling of being independent. And second is the financial aspect. With today's growing demands on lifestyle, having a double-income family is surely a plus point. Either ways, the one thing that you should never feel is guilty. Decisions that you make for your own and your family's well-being do not mean feeling guilty.

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND:

- 1** Remember quality time does not mean quantity time. Your baby does not need you all the time. However, whatever few hours you are with your baby should be dedicated to the baby, and at that time stay away from distractions like your mobile phone, laptop or television.
- 2** Plan for breastfeeding. Most moms feel guilty after weaning if the baby stopped breastfeeding early. You can consider expressing and storing milk in advance and you can also express at work. Do not stress and try and express before leaving for work and after coming back, as this can take away

valuable baby time.

- 3** Delegate household chores. You do not need to really do everything. Take as much help as you can get.
- 4** Plan for childcare in advance, whether you are opting for a family member, a nanny or a day care service to look after your baby. All are viable options as long as they are planned in advance.
- 5** Discuss your roles and timings with your manager in advance. You may be able to get shorter hours as you ease back into your work life or a work from

home option or even something as simple as travelling during non-peak hours.

- 6** Set realistic expectations from yourself. Do not plan on doing everything and being present for everything. You will surely be disappointed. Aim for important landmarks. Find time to play, talk and cuddle with your baby when you are at home but take pride in your work as well so that you personally have a well-rounded experience of being a parent and a professional. **MB**