

## Partners in parenting

### Meet the EXPERT



M&B' panellist **Sonali Shivlani** 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.

There is a lot of information out there about how you should prepare for maternity leave during pregnancy, plan in the post-natal period and finally return to work. But what about the role of the dad when the mum returns to work? Our culture has placed the woman in the nurturing and caring role. This can put a lot of physical and emotional strain on the mother. Work pressures, as well as home and parenting pressures, can make a woman feel overwhelmed and many times also unappreciated. This is the time for dads to step in and take over some of the chores which will give the mum some breathing space and also feel that she is loved and cared for.

**Here are some ideas on how dads can help make the back to work transition a smooth one for the mother.**

- Every woman has apprehensions about leaving her baby at home and being away at work. Address her fears and acknowledge them. Make her



comfortable and help her relieve the guilt. It may seem like multiple, never-ending, and very illogical discussions, but for her, the fears are very real.

- Take some leave if possible. If you have some additional leave available then you can take the same when your partner resumes work. This will make her feel comfortable about leaving the baby and getting back to her work life.

- Help with the household chores as much as possible. With the baby and her back to work routine, she is not going to have as much time to complete all her household duties. Helping with groceries or by clearing the house or even doing a little cooking can help her feel much more relaxed.

- A baby is a 24 by 7 job which means that they need a lot of attention. Helping with feeding, diapering, bathing or rocking her to sleep can take some of the burdens of the mum. This

can also help you to bond with your newborn and spend some quality father-child time.

- A new mum faces a lot of family pressures especially when it comes to taking care of the baby. She will be facing some flak from family on her decision to resume work and leave the baby behind. Support her and stand up for her in front of the family which will make her feel that she is not alone in this decision.

- Many prefer to have a double income family as this can help with maintaining a good lifestyle and also ensure the best care for the child. If this is a decision that you have taken together, she will need constant reassurance and support that she is on the right track. At any time if she feels that she needs to take a short sabbatical to be with her child be sure to support her in this decision as well. **MB**