

Feeling down in the dumps? It's really not so bad! Having a baby is not the beginning of the end! None of us today need to feel lost about what we can do or what we should be doing, because the truth really is that a stay-at-home mother can be just as productive as someone who has a full-time job.

In fact, remaining productive can help you avoid the post-partum blues, even while on maternity leave or after quitting your job. Here's two women who've managed to do it.

Help is round the corner

A great example of a mother who has managed to start a business is Ms Lau Geok Moon, a working mother and founder of Kid's Way (www.familyintune.com).

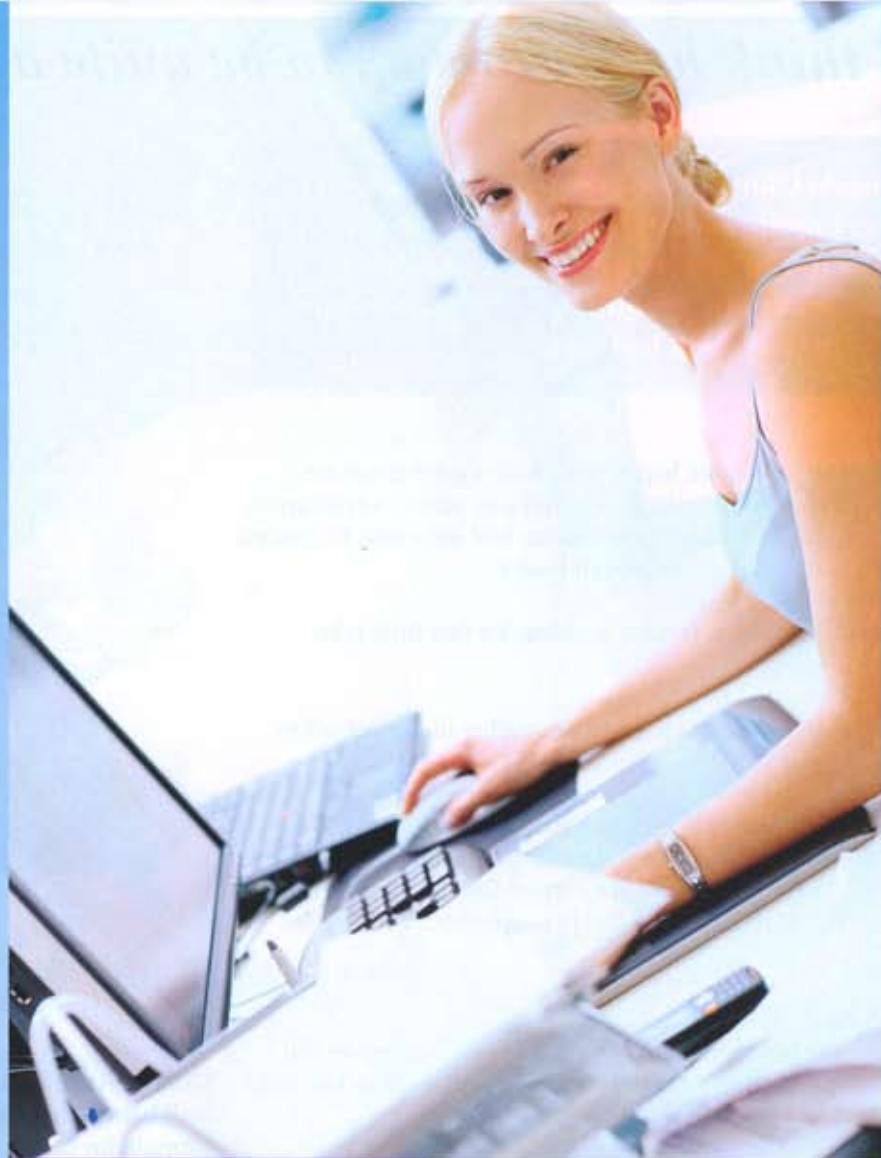


Lau Geok Moon & her family

"It was at first a hard decision to start my own business, one that was fraught with intense mixed feelings and confusion," said Geok Moon. On one hand, she told us, natural motherly love coupled with fatigue arising from the 24/7 demands of a baby made doing-nothing-else the logical choice.

And yes, the thought of "abandoning" her kids also plagued her with guilt.

Yet, she was struggling with something deeper -- herself as



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a person, being torn among the many roles she was bestowed with - mother, wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, sister, friend, and the once efficacious economy contributor that she was.

"I believe it is these kinds of battles that often drive one to depression!" confided Geok Moon.

Turning the corner

She did not have to struggle for long though. When her family was struck with financial instability, it became clear that she had to be prepared to hold the fort too.

And so the path was laid and the direction was clear to her husband

and her that they needed to be more in control of their income.

"That is, to run a business of our own rather than being employed," said Geok Moon.

Creative Community Singapore (CCS)

Geok Moon received support from the Creative Community Singapore (CCS) to start her own business. CCS was launched by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) in July 2005.

According to MICA, "CCS hopes to evolve a creative and connected community where arts, culture, business and technology converge to empower and engage individuals. CCS will provide various levels of support - including project facilitation, co-branding, marketing and co-funding - to implement creative ideas."

The possibilities afforded by CCS became very attractive to Geok Moon as they provided flexibility in timelines and budgets. "CCS has been great in giving opportunities to mothers who want to start a business," she said.

The setting up process, from coming up with a business proposal to finally starting her venture, took her close to nine months. Just about the time it takes to bring a baby into this world, ironically.

Making time

Ms Cheryl Liew, Vice-Chairperson of the Working Mothers Forum (WMF) Panel of Experts and Founder/Director of LifeWorkz (www.mylifeworkz.com) is another mother who bet on her own business and won.

Cheryl started her own business in 2004 because she had something passionate to share with other

people. She had a supportive boss and work place for her first two kids, which even today is still an exception and not the norm.

"I had an easy time adjusting as my boss and the organisation



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which I was in was very supportive. I enjoyed myself very much both at work and at home," said Cheryl.

But at the same time, she realised that organisations are facing issues relating to gender and generations in their workplaces. Hence, she set up LifeWorkz - a company that helps other companies attain optimal work and life balance, especially for women employees and those of differing ages.

"It was an eye-opener for me when I had my firstborn. I knew life would be different but certainly there

The Working Mothers Forum (WMF)

An initiative by Friso, the Working Mothers Forum (WMF) is a platform that aims to provide resources for busy mothers juggling work and family.

Keeping true to WMF's mission of championing the cause for working mothers, in addition to a nationwide survey on challenges facing mothers, WMF is also organising a public forum on 6 September to celebrate mothers in Singapore.

This forum will serve educational purposes and also offers a fun experience for mothers. It is meant for them to take a break from their busy schedules to relax, pamper themselves and take away some useful tips and newfound pride for their multiple roles.

Come join us at

working mothers forum
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Saturday, 6 Sept 2008
Conrad Centennial Singapore

For a fun-filled and inspiring experience, look out for registration details in the press, Guardian Pharmacy or visit www.workingmothersforum.org

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were gaps in my preparation for his arrival. The toughest part of it was the night feeds as I am one who needs at least nine hours of rest or else within three days, I will fall sick. My husband and my mum helped me through the feeds," said Cheryl.

But as she got stronger during confinement, she worked out schedules and menus which worked out like templates, which could be implemented when her baby's routine became more predictable. "Thankfully all my boys slept through the night when they were about six weeks old, and more or less got into the routine of wake up, feed and play," said Cheryl.

"What helped me the most was the preparation and reading and talking to people so that I am mentally prepared to cope, the first year upon baby's arrival," she added.

As Cheryl puts it, life is too short to have regrets. She celebrated the occasions when her boys took their first step, the opening night of their first semi-solid dinners, and when LifeWorkz was awarded their first contract.

Take the first bite

Are you facing the same scenarios? Maybe you too, like Cheryl and Geok Moon, have a creative idea that only needs nurturing and a little support from CCS.

Cheryl said, "Motherhood and setting up my own business both presented me the similar challenges, such as

- knowing what is needed,
- finding out where to seek support and
- if you can't find it, creating the support network that you need,
- hanging on in there and
- celebrating the little successes along the way."

Geok Moon too, has some encouraging words for potential entrepreneurs like yourself.

"Mothers are some of the most creative people in solving problems - as seen in the many hats they wear. Through it all, they would have amassed management and people skills far exceeding those taught in school."

She added, "Because of their

motherly instinct to protect what is theirs, mothers often have a "never-say-die" attitude and are the die-hards in seeing things through."

Well, perhaps it's time for you to get cracking as well.

For more information about CCS and WMF, visit www.creativecommunity.sg and www.workingmothersforum.org **LWB**

Steps to get you going after delivery

Cheryl has some advice on how to keep you productive while on maternity leave or after quitting your job:

- First of all, build a supportive network around yourself. This could mean getting your family or extended family to help out.
- Also be prepared to set aside some time to include interaction with other parents of new-borns, or to attend nutrition and health sessions - something that will get you out of the house for a while and get some external perspective of what's happening.
- Ease back to work with either flexible work or part-time work as you wean baby off having you around physically. Phasing-in allows you to adjust the pace of life that you will be comfortable in, given your new lifestyle needs.
- Remind yourself that you are not just a housewife but a caregiver to your family. We are used to identifying with our jobs or the role we play in organisations so we need to be mentally prepared to introduce ourselves, for example as "Hi I am Sally. I stay-home to care for my child".

Should you decide that you are likely to return to work in the next 3 to 5 years, here's what you should do:

- a. Draw up your career transition plan. This serves as a guide. However, you may love being at home so much that this transition plan will never be executed.
- b. Plan out what you will do to keep yourself updated with the developments in the industry and in the organisations. You might wish to consider project-basis assignments, or consider flexi-work to stay connected to the workplace. You may also want to consider continuing education while spending time with your child.
- c. Improve your skills through voluntary work as it not only gives you opportunity to hone your skills, it also gets you out of the house for some adult conversation.