

Parenting - Studying Mums

What considerations should mums make before deciding whether they should study further?

Mothers, especially new mothers, who are adjusting to a new role and routine may want to give themselves sometime for them to settle in to the new routine before committing themselves to anything.

Whether one is working or not is also a big factor. Having to work, manage the home, and also study may be more than one can juggle. Unless there are really flexible work and loads of support that one has, one may need to be prepared to be really stretched.

Furthermore, time spent with children and spouse may decrease considerably. It is important to remember that the course would not only have lectures but may also have homework and even study groups too. These take time. Travelling time needs to be factored in too.

Mothers are encouraged to ensure that there is adequate help that they can rely on as they do not want to be in class and worry about whether their child(ren) is/are being well taken care of.

Ideally, how old should their children at least be before they embark on a course of study?

There is no one perfect age that the parent can go on a course. Instead, find one that suits one's schedule as best as one can. For children who are not of school going age, mothers may find it more difficult as they need to be physically present with the child most of the time. However, mothers can still take time off and use the class/course to relive themselves from the children for a little while to upgrade themselves. On the other hand, mothers of children who are of school going age may have it a little easier as they can use the time when their children are in school to attend lessons or catch up with their reading.

How should they decide on whether to pursue a part-time course, full-time course, full-time accelerated course etc.?

This decision would depend on the needs of the mother and child; the mother would know the situation best to make the best decision. It is good to know that there will always be the initial teething period where both mother and child have to get used to the new routine and arrangement. Hence, mothers should not feel guilty about it as it may not be helpful for the situation. As there are many courses out there, it would be helpful to first research on what they are interested in beforehand to make sure that it fits their lifestyle before starting on it.

In addition, it is encouraged for the mother to discuss and communicate with her spouse as this concerns the lifestyle of the couple. It is also important for the mother to consider the amount of support she can get for not only the childcare, but also emotionally. Self-care is extremely important.

What issues are they likely to face as a mum and a student returning to academia after so many years?

Being a mother can often mean that the welfare of the child is one of their greatest concern. The mother feels responsible for the child because of his/her dependency on her. This is quite a change from when mothers were tertiary students as a single or when with a partner (married or unmarried).

Comparatively, mothers may feel more tired and require more time to digest the information given. Do not worry! The reason for this is not due to deterioration of memory or intellect but rather it is because there are more things for mothers to manage in their mind as child minding/rearing is a full time job. Many a times, the schedule of mothers is often worked around the activities of her children. For example, breastfeeding mothers may constantly think about when the next time they have to express milk.

What are the possible emotional implications for the mother and her family to look out for?

Feelings of guilt often arise when mothers feel that they should be with the child but they are out studying, or when they are in class and not spending enough time with them. It is also common for mothers to feel guilty when they believe that they should be enjoying motherhood but at the same time want to learn and study in a classroom environment. However, it is important for mothers to be mindful that so long as their child is secure, spending some time away from them should not be a cause of concern. Also, enjoying studying is good and is totally different from looking after the child. Mothers can enjoy both studying and motherhood!

Frustrations may arise when one feels that one is not able to handle everything. For example, when the work deadlines are drawing near and the child happens to fall sick at the same time. During such times, it is helpful to prioritise and handle each task one at a time instead of thinking about working on all the tasks at one go. That is, if the child's illness is more urgent, one may attend to it first and then move on to the work responsibilities. Alternatively, one may decide to hand the work temporarily over to someone else or ask for an extension. It is important for one to ensure that they get enough rest. One will not be able to function well in anything if one is tired all the time.

What are the possible implications on the children?

- Negative

Children are very observant and would often react similarly to how people in their surroundings are feeling. If mothers are showing signs of anxiousness, constantly running around, calling back, and trying to ensure that everything is in place, children are able to sense that and would also feel the same way too. In turn, a vicious cycle occurs, where the child would cling on to their mothers, thus leading mothers to feel bad in leaving the child.

- Positive

In the same way, when children observe that the mother is enjoying studying, and is able to manage well, they would also view studying in a positive light. In addition, they would learn from observing their mother how to manage all the different roles more effectively.

Here at The Therapy Room, a team of psychologists – led by Geraldine Tan, the principal psychologist – conducts parenting workshops and programmes. For more information, please click [here](#) for the upcoming parenting events. In addition, the team of psychologists has ample experience working with numerous children and parents using therapeutic interventions. Should you have any concerns or inquiries, please feel free to click [here](#) to contact us and find out more.

What tips can mothers use with regards to juggling family, assignments, lectures and exams?

- a. Pre-empt different scenarios
- b. Know that things don't always go smoothly and the mothers just have to do the best they can.
- c. Ensure that the course fits their schedule
- d. Talk to their spouse.
- e. Obtain support from their family members
- f. Ensure there are adequate avenues for help.
- g. Talk to their children to let them know that there would be some changes soon.
- h. Talk to their friends or colleagues who have had a similar situation. Hear from their experiences.
- i. Mothers are encouraged to enjoy what they are doing!!!

If the course requires a six-month stint overseas, what issues might they face and how can they be best handled?

As this is a moderate length of time, one may ask himself/herself if he/she would like to bring his/her child along or leave him in Singapore.

If one would like to bring their child overseas, there are a few questions one has to ask oneself such as whether they have resources to help take care of the child over there.

If the child is staying in Singapore for one reason or another, one needs to ask whether the help is reliable and if the parents and child feel comfortable. Another important question to ask is whether one would miss the child's milestone or important activity. We do have technology to help and we can videotape all these but some people may still prefer being present.

After asking all these questions and one knows that one will still be upset, the mothers are encourage to think about what would help them better. Would calling back once a day help? Some mothers send a postcard back every week. Or have the child write an email everyday or send you a postcard. It really isn't easy and there may tears, fears and learning (of a different sort) but if one is able to cope with it, it would be quite fulfilling.