Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Can women reduce the career cost of motherhood?

There is no question that having a child impacts women in the workplace. Frequently discussed issues on this topic are related to time off of work, long term impacts of salary and career trajectory. These issues are undeniable in many workplace environments. These struggles need to be addressed in broad scale to decrease the gender disparities that exist in the workplace.

While we at the EAP acknowledge these issues exist we are here to help address some other less discussed but no less important challenges many women face having a child/children and staying in the workforce.

For many couples there is no question that both parents need to continue to work for financial reasons. With that necessity a mother may feel a great deal of pressure from herself and her relationship to return to the workforce as quickly as possible creating a great deal of stress for her simply anticipating and preparing to leave her child at home with a caretaker or at day care.

Looking for these services, vetting them and picking one can be exhausting! And a new mother most likely doesn't want to pick just any childcare services to take care of her child, which is appropriate. For a mother to return to work and be productive its necessary for her to trust and be comfortable with the childcare she has arranged. Even when comfortable with the arranged childcare it would be normal for them to be anxious and worried about their child for a period of time.

Even if issues of childcare are sorted out there is a great deal of care that goes on for a child while a mother is home. In homes were parenting responsibilities are split equally the work load is still exhausting, but the truth of the matter is that many mothers take on greater childcare responsibilities when they are home than fathers.

Many mothers will say this is a great experience for them and they do it happily, it is absolutely necessary to acknowledge that new mothers need time for self-care and to relieve stress. This can be a very difficult thing new mothers often feel guilty taking time for themselves and not devoting themselves wholly to a new born. Frequently this internal conflict leads a mother to put her needs in the back of her mind and she can end up ignoring them. In the long run this isn't helpful for the mother or the child.

A new mother needs to find a balance between taking care of her child, managing her own needs to recharge and relax, and coping with returning to a working schedule. All of these thing on their own are a challenge, and they can be managed together, but it won't happen overnight and there will be lots of trial and error.

Most important is to plan ahead, and yes many of your plans may not work, and that's okay. Even if just a few of them work it will greatly improve your life at home and at work.

As with any challenge you face, it can be hard to figure everything out on your own your EAP is here to help. We have counselors available 24 hours a day to talk with you about the struggles you are facing.

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