

An eternal dilemma

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To work or not to work, that's the question confronting many working mothers. SHEFALI TRIPATHI MEHTA on why it's important to justify the reasons and stick to one's decision

When her new neighbour came to know that Radha was a working mother, she sarcastically commented, "I can also go to work but my husband earns enough." Radha fumed. Some days later, another neighbour made a dig at Radha's working status by saying how she was blessed because she did not have to go to work and could care for her children round-the-clock. When a distant relative's daughter ran away from home, her aunt taunted Radha, "Her mother was always busy with her career. What is the child's fault? This is a wakeup call for you. Don't run after your career so much." Radha found herself again into that eternal dilemma which confronts each working mother innumerable times during her career. To work or to stay-at-home. Apart from the guilt pangs she suffers from for not 'being there' for the family, especially the kids, every time a situation like this comes up, a working mother is thrown back into self-doubt. A question that crops up again and again in her mind is - Am I doing the right thing? Am I being fair to my child? Am I being self-centred? Can I afford to sit at home? If working is crucial to running the house entirely or partially, the burden of the dilemma is off to some extent. Because she does not have an option. But when the need is more emotional or intellectual where the woman wants to put her skills, qualifications and education to good use, wants to feel worthy or be financially independent, she finds the task of justifying her stand to herself, more than others, most difficult. Although she does not need to justify her reasons to anyone - she herself needs to be very clear about it. Is she happy with her decision? This is the answer she needs to give to herself. And be absolutely sure and resolute about it so that others are not able to raise doubts in her mind time and again.