

**SLEEP SECRETS: how to get baby—and you—snoozing**

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## meet the new at-home mom (she's not who you think!)

Forget everything you've heard about stay-at-home moms. A new generation is having its bonbons and eating (and maybe selling) them too!

**I**n my pre-kid life, I never imagined that someday I'd be a stay-at-home mom—hey, I didn't go to grad school to spend my days changing diapers. But when I held my first baby, Mathilda, I had a complete change of heart. As soon as we locked eyes, all those career and financial worries faded. They didn't disappear, but they certainly became secondary.

I have tons of friends with similar experiences. They're not clones—today's stay-at-home mom (SAHM) may be a tattooed rock singer, the CEO of her own company or a green-living activist—but they all have something in common: a deep desire to be there for every moment of their babies' lives—the good, the bad and the unbelievably messy. If you're considering life as a SAHM, both sweet rewards and tough challenges await. Read on for insight and advice from experts and moms who've been in the trenches.

### bye-bye pearls and casseroles— today's at-home mom is...

**launching an at-home business** ▶ There are 10.1 million women-owned businesses in the United States, says the Center for Women's Business Research. No firm statistics exist on how many are run by stay-at-home moms, but it stands to reason that the percentage is increasing in the Wi-Fi age. "Over 90 percent of the moms we've interviewed

"In the past, moms have been reluctant to



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said the desire for family flexibility is the number-one reason they work from home," says Ellen Parlapiano, co-founder of mompreneuronline.com. "Another big change we've seen in the past 15 years is acceptance. In the past, moms have been reluctant to tell clients they work from home. Now it's commonplace, even respectable." Mom-owned businesses, which used to be heavy on arts and crafts, now run the professional gamut, says Parlapiano: Web design, attorney, marketing guru, social media coaching, you name it.

**blogging about her life—and reaching others** ▶ Plug "mom bloggers" into a search engine and you'll come up with thousands of SAHMs who chronicle their daily lives online. Moms share stories and tips about single parenting, adoption, home schooling and more. The most popular blogs, like the Pioneer Woman and Dooce, turned their authors into celebrities who rack up book and movie deals.

5.6  
MILLION  
women  
stay home  
to care for  
children  
and family.

Jen Singer, the New Jersey mom of two who created mommasaid.net, says her blog averages 90,000 views per month; it's not a huge money-maker per se, but it has led to book deals, speaking engagements and endorsement offers—none of which would have happened in the pre-Internet era. "Mom bloggers are hugely influential because they represent the authentic voices of other moms," says Jennifer James, founder of mom bloggersclub.com, a community that's 10,000 strong. Making a living from a blog is tough, she adds, but there are other perks. "Moms who pen really great blogs are heavily courted by brands to review their product," she says. "Some receive thousands of dollars in products each month."

**unapologetic about her choices** ▶ A 2007 Pew Research Center survey shows that more at-home moms today (48 percent) consider being home full time the ideal

tell clients they work from home. Now it's commonplace, even respectable."



situation than they did 10 years ago (39 percent). Inversely, just 21 percent of working moms say working full time is ideal, down from 32 percent in 1997. "In my research, there seems to be a backlash among the millennial generation; in a sense, they're modeling themselves after their grandmothers, not their mothers," says Susan Shapiro Barash, a women's issues expert and author of *You're Grounded Forever...But First, Let's Go Shopping: The Challenges Mothers Face With Their Daughters and Ten Timely Solutions*. Many of these young women look at their baby boomer moms and question why they'd want to

be them. Some of those moms struggled in their marriages and had a tough time balancing work and family, she says. That doesn't mean today's SAHM has abandoned her career aspirations or traded her BlackBerry for an ironing board, just that she's more concerned about living a balanced life than proving she's Superwoman.

### WAHM: the best of both worlds

When I first started working from home 15 years ago, I had never heard the acronym WAHM (work-at-home mom). The landscape has certainly changed; now, instead of "Work

### pick your at-home-mom style

**earth mama** She grows her own organic veggies, makes her own baby food and, of course, washes her babies' diapers in environmentally friendly suds.

"Every evening, I head out to the garden with my daughter, Sukey. Last summer, we ate a handful of raspberries each night; it was such a sweet thing to do together before she went to bed."

—CASSANDRA WRIGHT, 28, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

**churchy mom** Her best friends are moms at Bible study, and family-friendly church events like potluck dinners figure prominently in her social schedule.

"Being a SAHM allowed me to plug into the mom's group at our new church, which helped me get connected a lot more quickly. I developed several really strong friendships as a result."

—SONYA BRAUN, 37, Winnipeg, Manitoba

versus staying home?" the question for moms-to-be is often "What work can I do from home?" Brooke Hall, who runs a Web design business ([brookehalldesign.com](http://brookehalldesign.com)) and stays home with her 10-month-old son, Owen, is happy doing both. "I get to be here for the first giggle and step, and yet working from home gives me an identity other than 'mom,'" says the 27-year-old from Dublin, California. "I'm still the same person I was before the baby—partly due to my continuing professional life."

It can be a crazy juggling act on some days, but most WAHMs say the multitasking is worth it. "The best part of the work/kid combination is that I'm not lost and drowning in diapers and plastic building blocks," says Amy McAllister, 23, of Elk Grove, California, who teaches others how to bake and decorate cakes at [littlerycakes.com](http://littlerycakes.com) and is studying to be a licensed acupuncturist. "I feel strong as an individual, which makes me a better mother and an even better role model to my 2-year-old son."

#### to be a successful WAHM, you need:

✓ **the right attitude** Working at home is still work, there's just not someone else telling you what to do and when to do it. The key to success is being self-motivated to haul yourself out of bed at dawn and get cracking before the baby wakes up—or stay up past baby's bedtime, when you're likely tired too.

✓ **a plan** Crossing your fingers and winging it is not enough. "Even before I had kids, I chose a profession that would allow me to stay home and raise children while working on the side," says Melissa Leonard, 37, a New York City etiquette consultant. "I've made it work by taking jobs when it's convenient for me—mostly on weekends when my husband can be at home with our baby."

✓ **a support system** Since my husband, Tony, works nights, he was often able to take the babies when I had phone interviews or pressing deadlines. I've also done swaps with other moms, hired baby sitters to fill in during crunch times and kept a stash of exciting new toys to pull out when necessary. (A crinkly orange

44%  
of SAHMs  
are under 35,  
younger  
than their  
working-mom  
counterparts.

caterpillar once bought me about 15 minutes of quiet time.)

✓ **a realistic schedule** Nap time is almost always work time for WAHMs. "I'd almost hyperventilate running to the computer as soon as I got the kids down—I knew the time would be short, and so I had to make the most of it," says Shelley Hunter, 44, who runs a gift card website ([giftcardgirlfriend.com](http://giftcardgirlfriend.com)) from her Danville, California, home.

✓ **your own space** Even if it's a tiny corner of your dining room, you need a physical space devoted to work. "I turned a spare bedroom into my office, and it's set up just like any professional space would be," says Angela Halloran, 35, a web designer ([boutiquewebdesigns.com](http://boutiquewebdesigns.com)) who lives in Noblesville, Indiana. "At the end of each work day, I close the office door and don't open it again until the next morning."

### beyond first smiles and steps: what at-home moms love

**lots and lots of flexibility** ▶ "As a stay-at-home mom, I have a lot more leeway in my schedule when things go wrong," says Hunter. "When one of my babies got sick, I didn't have to call off work or find someone to watch him." You can also run errands during nonpeak hours—hitting the grocery store, the bank and the gym at 10 a.m. versus the 5:30 p.m. rush or scheduling doctor appointments and haircuts when it's most convenient for you, not your supervisor.

### at-home moms who rock our world

**1** Follow Meg Duerksen as she colorfully and humorously navigates life with her five kids, Etsy pillow shop and photography business. [megduerksen.typepad.com/whatever](http://megduerksen.typepad.com/whatever)

**2** If you're looking to redecorate, remodel or anything of the like, visit [younghouselove.com](http://younghouselove.com), where DIYer Sherry Petersik will happily help you along the way.

**3** Heather Hamilton invites you into her crafty world with fun tutorials and stunning photo collages of her family. Once you go in, you'll never want to leave. [blessedlittlenest.com](http://blessedlittlenest.com)

**4** SAHM and children's party designer Kim Stoegbauer will inspire you for your baby's first birthday. [thetomkatstudio.com](http://thetomkatstudio.com)

—KELLY LADD SANCHEZ

**artsy mom** She always has a project going—whether it's painting a mural for the nursery or selling her custom-made diaper carriers online; being a SAHM seems to inspire her creative side.

"If I didn't dedicate some of my day to creating something—whether it's a quilt, a photography session or a fabulous homemade meal—I wouldn't be as happy."

—NICOLE HOXIE, 26, Livermore, California

**high-tech mama** Nap time is golden for the plugged-in WAHM. She has her laptop next to the nursing pillow, headset ready for a conference call and a pacifier handy at all times.

"Even though I work at home, I can meet my clients face-to-face via Skype; I just try not to schedule meetings when the kids are underfoot."

—LEAH HUMPHRIES, 43, Erie, Pennsylvania



**having a well-rounded life** ▶

Being an at-home mom allowed me to take advantage of opportunities that would have been difficult in the 9-to-5 world. If I wanted to have coffee with a nearby mom friend, for instance, we broke out the strollers and went. If I decided to volunteer at a church luncheon, I strapped Mathilda into her BabyBjörn and pitched in. If I felt like taking the baby to the park for an afternoon and playing peekaboo in the grass, I didn't have to clear it with anyone.

**direct-access breastfeeding** ▶

At-home moms don't have to worry about toting the industrial-strength breast pump to the office or pumping in the bathroom. "Because I was home with my second baby, I was able to nurse him longer," says Stephanie Burchett, 30, of Pittsburgh. "My older son had asthma, allergies and a ton of ear

infections as a baby, but the second one has no major health issues so far—I'm sure breastfeeding longer and being home helped."

**siestas** ▶ "Napping during the day was a huge benefit for me, especially after a wakeful night with the baby," says Sonya Braun, 37, a Winnipeg, Manitoba, mom of three. "Losing a lot of sleep at night takes its toll quickly!"

**time to smell the coffee (or read *Goodnight Moon* 20 times a day)**

▶ "If moms allow themselves to be 'in the moment' with their babies, they find such raw happiness it is priceless," says Darla Shine, author of *Happy Housewives* and mom of two. "I would give anything to have one hour in the rocking chair nursing my newborns again." The infant stage flies by in a flash, she adds—being at home allows you to savor every day.

## keeping your sense of self

Just because you're at home doesn't mean your life has to be all baby, all the time. In fact, having a grown-up outlet will make you a better—and happier—mom. Here are some ways to do it:

**find an activity that works with your baby's schedule** ▶

Shelley Hunter always loved team sports but found making softball practice tricky with an unpredictable infant. "I signed up for tennis lessons to learn a more flexible sport. I only need one other person, and I can play at any time of the day."

**focus on one specific, nonbaby thing each day** ▶

For me, reading a novel (as opposed to yet another baby book) provided an escape and kept me sane through the early weeks and months of motherhood. At the very least, glance at the newspaper every day to keep a little perspective on the wider world.

**have a regular date night (even if you don't have cash for a sitter)** ▶

"On Thursday and Sunday nights, my husband and I hang out in the family room," says Hunter. "We make popcorn, watch a show and snuggle on the couch together." Make a rule: Talk about something other than the baby for a certain amount of time. It doesn't have to be hours, 20 or 30 minutes, is probably realistic.

**take mini-breaks** ▶

Switching gears for even a few moments is refreshing. "When my babies napped, I would take five minutes, sit quietly and enjoy a snack," says Stephanie Vozza, author of *Five Minute Mom's Club: 105 Tips to Make a Mom's Life Easier*. "It was a little break, but it made a huge difference in my mind-set."

**\$117,867**

the annual monetary value of a stay-at-home mother, according to a 2010 survey by salary.com. Find out how much you'd be paid for your mom duties at [mom.salary.com](http://mom.salary.com).