

# How to get your life back AB (after birth)

by Tina Shaw

I've had a busy night. I've been primping and preening for well over an hour. "Where does she find the time?" I hear you ask. Well, my son is in bed and it's after twelve. I have been bikini waxing, eyebrow tinting and hair colouring. I look like a plucked chicken, but I know that when morning and make-up arrives I will be my best self.

No I am not getting ready for a hot date or a swim suit competition, I have a meeting with one of my many bosses tomorrow (oh the harried life of a freelancer). It may seem like I've gone to a lot of effort for a work meeting, but these days any outing without my child is worthy of an Oscars-like lead up. Sadly, I am the woman at the Shopping Centre teetering around in heels looking like I made a wrong turn on the way to a nightclub.

It's all about trying to reclaim the real me, the me before I had a child. Not an easy task, but three years down the track, one that I'm definitely up for. Ladies join me on a journey of rediscovery.

- 1.** Step one in our search for the Holy Grail of life outside the house is to make absolutely sure that we are ready. There is no point venturing out if it's not what you really want. It took me two years to work up the strength to leave my son for a couple of hours (and that was just to go grocery shopping).
- 2.** Secondly, be prepared for tremendous 'Mother Guilt'. It happens to us all. Try not to feel guilty for giving yourself some time to be you (not you the parent, you the person). There will always be someone who will say "I never leave my children with a babysitter", or "You must have so much time on your hands if you can still manage to get your hair done regularly". Ignore these people and remember the old saying, they can't judge you, 'till they have walked a mile in

your shoes. Everyone's situation is different, mother, or not.

- 3.** Next, look up your old girlfriends and start to cultivate new friendships. Don't ever underestimate the power of the sisterhood. We tend to get so wrapped up in our children and their social lives that we forget about our own. There's nothing better than having a good chat with the girls. Remember *Sex and the City*? Where would Miranda (the mother of the group) have been without Carrie, Samantha and Charlotte? They say friends are the family that you make for yourself and in our itinerate communities where people move around so frequently, many of us don't have family living nearby and need to develop new relationships to help fill the void.
- 4.** Venturing out can be frightening. Worrying about how the kids are doing, trying not to spend too much money and panicking that our backsides look too big in our pre-baby outfits. It's a minefield out there, so take baby steps. Perhaps see a movie (most cinemas now have mother-and-baby sessions as well), organise an early dinner, or maybe just spend a few hours at the shops (who knows you may run into me in my impossible heels getting the groceries sans child).
- 5.** Most importantly, you must look after yourself. You won't be any good to your children if you don't take care of number one. Do whatever it takes to make you feel good about you, be that going back to work, taking time to watch your favourite television show or booking in for a massage. It's the hardest thing in the world for a Mother to put herself first, but remember that it's the little things that keep us going. Try to stop denying yourself life's pleasures and enjoy some me-time.

Remember that the life you have now will never be exactly the way it was before you gave birth. It's important to retain your identity and the activities that define you as a person. Taking the steps to reclaim this time for yourself will help to even the balance. Your new life should combine all of the best elements of your former life, with the wondrous time consuming little people that have taken over the here and now.

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"Reclaiming my life – with a girlfriend and a Pina Colada"

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