

Interview with Lauren

+Lauren accountant, Marr, John 11 m

I: In making the decision to go back to work, when did you make that decision?

LAUREN: I knew all along, I think from the beginning I knew all along that I was going back to work. I knew that I was going to take 12 months maternity leave, I didn't want less, I wanted the 12 months because I could see the children that were 11 months, 12 months were big enough to go into care and the younger I didn't think was too good. I think from the very beginning when we decided to have a child I always knew I would go back to work. It's not sort of later on I decided to go back.

I: Even before you were pregnant you decided that? Was that a decision you made together as a couple? Or was that your decision?

LAUREN: Everything is always discussed, things like that that are major are discussed, I think ultimately again he leaves the final decision up to myself, it wasn't like he would advise me to go back to work if I didn't want to. But together we always knew that when I had a baby I would want to go back to work and continue with my career. I'm also studying part time, it's never been a thought in my mind to just go and stop work and be a housewife, I always knew that I would go back to work. So really together, and individually. I think if I said I wanted to stop work that would be fine, that would be another decision, we would discuss it.

I: In terms of information about going back to work after you have had a baby, what it is going to be like, did you find anything that was helpful?

LAUREN: Not in literature, not anything to read, no that was really from talking to people who had gone back to work. Nothing from the health sister either, she doesn't have that much advice.

I: What would you have liked, and found most practical.

LAUREN: Probably the advantages and disadvantages or something because you are always in two minds about it, am I doing the right thing, is it going to be alright to leave him in day care. It's a long day for the poor child, 8

hours or more in somebody else's care. Again you have got this doubt in the back of your mind whether you are doing the right thing or not. I could have used some information to get a clearer picture of what it would be like.

I: And you didn't find anything?

LAUREN: No, I don't think there is anything about really, even after visiting a few creches, because I didn't got to just one, I picked a few, talking to people there, they've got all good things to say of course. That was helpful just going to them and talking to them and asking them about their programs and things.

I: How do you feel now about your decision to go back to work?

LAUREN: I'm pleased. After visiting the creches themselves and spending a day or so there and watching what the children do and the programs and the people who take care of the children, I'm really happy and reassured, I'm relieved now I guess, after what I've seen.

I: You've spent some time in the centre.

LAUREN: I've spent time in the centres, more than one centre. Two.

I: And how do you feel about John being looked by someone other than yourself?

LAUREN: Bit apprehensive, bit of a worry and you hope that they give them the affection and everything that they need, it looks quite pleasing, it looks like they get similar care to what a mother and father would give. It's still a little bit of worry because it's such a long day. Perhaps if it was part time it would be different, but overall pleased I think it will work out OK, I think it will be fine.

I: And how did you make the decision to actually use a centre? Rather than family day care or any other alternative here.

LAUREN: I think a centre is more like starting school but starting children a little bit earlier than usual. I think leaving them at somebody else's house, I don't like the idea at all, I don't fancy that idea at all.

I: Did you ever consider it?

LAUREN: No. I always knew that if I couldn't get into a creche I would stop work until I found a creche. I think I am really against anybody else looking after children in their own house, especially if they have their own children. I always think that unless they are qualified, really qualified mothercraft people, that they are always going to take preference to some other child, especially their own. I don't know, I think that's my opinion.

I: Right. And that's why you decided. Anything else about centres that attracted you?

LAUREN: The social aspect of it, for the children being with the other children, probably because there are qualified staff who know what they are doing. A lot of the government run, I always chose a government run one because there is always inspections about health, and health people going through apparently, they say they have a lot that going, there is more people using these centres. I think it is monitored really well, it is more secure in that way.

I: How do you feel about making the decision, about using a day care centre and having John in a day care centre.

LAUREN: I think I feel good. I've been looking forward to going back and going back with a clear mind, I feel quite happy about it. I think it will work out well. Again I want to wait and see, I'll give myself 6 months or 12 months and try it out and see whether John's personality changes for the worst or whether he seems really happy. If he's happy, I'll be more than happy. It's still on a trial basis of course but at this stage I feel quite comfortable with it.

I: How do you feel at the moment about being separated from John?

LAUREN: When I put him in day care. I think that will be hard, I think at first it will be really emotional I think. I will be quite sad. It will be really hard. Hopefully he will be happy. I've taken him a few times but I've always been there, he seems alright, maybe because I'm there. Hopefully he won't be really upset, that's all I worry about. I'll probably ring up every day and if he seems fine I'll be relieved. But myself I probably will

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really miss him. I don't think I'll know until I've experienced it but I think I'll really miss him a lot.