

Interview with Maureen

+ MAUREEN, MARIKA 10.5 MTHS CARE 2WKS.

Q4: Why did you choose this form of day care?

MAUREEN: Well I looked at a few private centres and I came home and I cried. Because I just couldn't do it. I just cried and I didn't sleep for about two nights and then I rang my employer and I said no I don't want the position ...and anyway this day I thought would I be lucky enough to get her into this children's centre - no I wouldn't be lucky enough but I rang up ... and the directress said do you want to come down and have a look and decide if you want the position and I said I want the position I'll come down and start settling her in later.

+ INTERRUPTION, BABY CRYING, MOTHER NOT CONCENTRATING

MAUREEN: A lot of the other places I rang said all the children go to sleep at such and such a time and I thought but she's only ten and a half months old she's an excellent sleeper - she sleeps two hours in the morning two hours in the afternoon and 14 hours at night - that's why I'm so bored! And if she was left awake from seven in the morning to twelve or one or whenever all the kids go to sleep she would just be dead on her feet and she would become so unsettled. So when I said to them when do they have a sleep? she said, When they are tired they have a sleep! Well this is the sort of day care that I wanted for my child.

+BABY SETTLED, ASLEEP FOR REMAINDER OF THE INTERVIEW.

Q5: In the weeks following the birth of Marika how did you feel about returning to work and leaving her?

MAUREEN: I never would have dreamt - I mean, my mother-in-law can't believe it. She thinks that - She's from the old school. She doesn't have many friends, her whole life's revolved around her children, (she has four children) and now of course around her grand-children. Her attitude was poor Marika, poor Marika. At the day care centre I said poor

grandma is mortified. They said look bring her down and show her over ...

JAN: Have you tried to talk through your feelings about returning to work with anyone?

MAUREEN: No. No. Not really.

JAN: You didn't think it necessary?

MAUREEN: I guess I felt so stupid because all I could do was cry but I wanted to go back to work and I didn't feel I could go and talk to anyone of my friends and say I don't want to go to work I don't want to leave her because they would have thought well don't. Don't be an idiot then. I just thought I was being really stupid ... Maybe my neighbour I might have said I feel such an idiot and then she said 'cos we're really good friends - Oh I'll have Marika for you. And I said No I don't want that I want her to be around other children it was just really hard making that step. So she's probably the only person ..yeah. But she hasn't returned to work since she had her little girl so she couldn't really know how I felt either.

JAN: Do you think people in general understand how mothers feel about leaving their baby when they go back to work?

MAUREEN: Some people do and some people don't. Like other people that I know that have returned to work be it part-time or full-time - when you say Oh I felt so bad I cried - they go - I know I felt sick. But other people they think that you don't love them anymore or all of a sudden the novelty's worn off or something like that. That's the impression that I get. Yes well she's not really a baby anymore so you don't want...I think that they think like that. You feel like saying - It does hurt - when you go to pick her up and she's been crying for 15 minutes - because they have an uncanny way of telling the time. When they see all the other kids leaving and their Mum's not there - if you are running late or whatever - and you feel really bad - people don't know that you still feel bad every day when that happens and with my little

girl I feel really bad because I don't pick her up till half past four and she goes to bed at half past six so its only really two hours a day and if I worked full time I would be a mess because I'd never get to see her....

JAN: Do you think the day care centre staff are sensitive to your feelings about leaving Marika?

MAUREEN: Ah yes they were wonderful. Because I kept crying. What happened was I settled her in during the week then I was going if she would settle - I was going to leave her on the Monday following that was the Friday and it was the big day when she had to have a sleep at daycare and I didn't sleep the night before because she's a really good sleeper in her own bed or in her port-a-cot but she gets frightened in strange beds and things like that. Anyway I took her down and Sally goes - Oh we'll try and put her down and I was so nervous I just threw her in the cot - trousers jumper everything. Later on I found out that Sally thought - Oh God does she send Marika to bed like that. But she screamed so I started crying - I think it wasn't till that day they really realised ..I'm mean they knew I was concerned about her and I was just like every other first mum I guess. Then they said to me go home and come back at two o'clock. And this was ten o'clock. But I was all geared up to leave her on Monday and go to work but I hadn't thought about coming home like I had to come home in case she was unsettled and they had to call me - and just staying in the house without her. Then you really ...four hours to think about is it really worth it...I just felt so guilty ..and um...but they were really good.. she rang me back and she goes - and I thought Oh no ... she's really bad the phone's ringing - and she said look I'm just ringing you to tell you I hope you don't mind I rocked her and sang her to sleep in her bedand I just started crying and said Oh thanks a lot. Then when I went down to pick her up I was crying again. And I said to Sally - I'll bring my own tissues on Monday. They are really understanding

JAN: How about in the future? Would you change anything if you were perfectly free to?

MAUREEN: Well I'll probably only work until I become pregnant with another one - I only really plan on perhaps working until Christmas or something. I don't know I might work longer. But certainly when she's not in daycare I will join some kind of toddlers gym or activity group or something for her because I realise it's important. Before she went to daycare I didn't realise that children should be out in the fresh air so much ...one thing I did say to day care was don't let her grow up too quickly but umm really honestly what an awful mother always having intentions of taking her for a walk but someone rings up or comes over and they never get their walk or anything and now I realise that is much more important

JAN: Well you've just about answered my next question? Which is from you experience what is the least positive thing for you about returning to work and having your child in day care? And the most positive thing?

MAUREEN: Well the most positive is that I've found out that I could be doing this and that it's something that she absolutely loves to do. So when it rains on Monday Tuesday I'll think oh no she misses out on going outside. She really loves it.

JAN: How about the least positive thing about having a child in daycare?

MAUREEN: Coming home to the mess. Umm. I suppose I don't know ...because she's at a stage when she's doing things like the day she picked up a brush and brushed her hair and I just go - Ohhhhhh! look at how she's brushing her hair she's understanding. The most least positive thing that if she was especially in full-time care I would be missing out on seeing her do that and it might not be until three weeks later when her brush is on the floor that she picks up a brush and does it and she's been doing it all this time. I think because I'm really funny about her doing things and me making sure I see them in effect even my

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husband says - I wish I didn't have to go to work and I could enjoy these new things too. And I said to Sally - I said do not tell me when Marika walks. She goes - I wouldn't dare: we never tell the mums.