

FINANCIAL TIMES TUESDAY FEBRUARY 10 2009

Working mothers made to feel selfish

From Ms Elizabeth Pollitzer.

Sir, The question that Lucy Kellway does not ask ("My new sense of guilt as a selfish working mother", February 9) is why being a working parent should be "selfish" behaviour for women if it is not for men.

Work is not just about making money, it is also a vehicle through which women and men can channel their desire for knowledge and a sense of competence; recognition of achievement by peers and respect from others; an understanding of the world around them and the ability to influence it.

Instead of making women feel guilty, selfish and inadequate, we should examine the conditions under which individuals are expected to balance their desire or need to work

and the caring for the family. These could be significantly improved, especially for women, through greater availability of properly-paid part-time work; more flexibility in the way work is organised; equal recognition of work done by women and men; more affordable and accessible childcare; and more retraining opportunities to enable a return to the workforce after a voluntary career break taken to bring up children.

These are not impossible or expensive things for society to put in place, and more innovative than sending women back to the kitchen.

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No need to return to the kitchen

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