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# THE OFFICE



Julie Buckham, husband David, sons Micah, 3, and Isaac, 2 months.

Family photo

## When Mom goes back to her 'paying' job

By Dalia Wheatt  
 dwheatt@tampabay.com

Julie Buckham works 20 hours a week.

Take that back — Julie Buckham gets *paid* for her work 20 hours a week. But as many working moms can attest, her job is never really done.

Buckham, 28, of St. Pete, has two young sons and works evenings and weekends as a sign-language interpreter. To avoid putting her kids in day care, Buckham arranged her work schedule around that of her husband,

David, a minister at Central Christian Church. The couple are tag-team caring for Micah, 3, and Isaac, 2 months.

"Sometime over the summer, we had looked at day care options and realized that financially it would be totally worthless for me to work full-time and have full-time day care, because the majority of my income would then be paying someone else to take care of my children, and we would all be losing," Buckham said.

For many moms returning to the office, working outside the home feels like a losing game. But it doesn't have



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to, says Atlanta career coach Hallie Crawford.

"I believe that a more fulfilled mother is, therefore, a better mother to the child," said Crawford, 34, who is expecting her first baby Dec. 26.

Crawford offers these tips for Buckham and other moms "opting in" to the workplace:

**Problem:** You've been out of the job market for years.

**Solution:** Review your previous accomplishments and consider taking a class in your field to get up to date. "If you don't have the confidence, the employer won't have confidence in you, either," Crawford said.

**Problem:** You're afraid the job will take away all your family time.

**Solution:** Set firm boundaries — say, on Mondays you must leave the office by 7 p.m. so the fam can watch *Dancing with the Stars* together. Know your scheduling options, which may include working part-time, flexing your time to work the same hours your kids are in school, telecommuting and job sharing. "Don't hesitate to ask. The worst they can say is no," Crawford said. When her baby arrives, Crawford plans to take four to six weeks maternity leave, then work Mondays through Thursdays while the baby is in day care. She'll take Fridays off from coaching.

**Problem:** You feel guilty for leaving your kids.

**Solution:** Rearrange your schedule to address whatever's causing the guilt trip. For instance, call your kids on a lunch break to help with home-

work, or ask your boss for flex time so you never miss a soccer game.

**Problem:** The house is a wreck.

**Solution:** Prioritize. "I have a laundry basket full of clothes in the middle of my living room right now," Buckham said with a laugh. "There's no way that I can do it all, and if I tried to do it all and if I was successful at doing it all, then something else is going to be lacking, in my opinion, because it's physically impossible for me to be able to accomplish all those things."

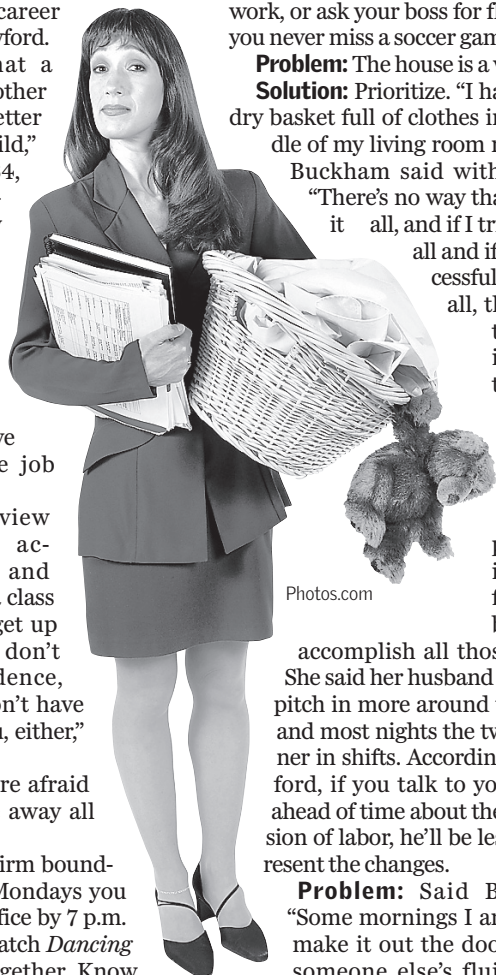
She said her husband has had to pitch in more around the house, and most nights the two eat dinner in shifts. According to Crawford, if you talk to your spouse ahead of time about the new division of labor, he'll be less likely to resent the changes.

**Problem:** Said Buckham, "Some mornings I am lucky to make it out the door without someone else's fluid on me, whether's that's spit, spit-up, snot."

**Solution:** Invest in some new suits, and hit up the MAC counter for something to cover those bags under your eyes. You deserve to look and feel like the professional you are.

**Problem:** "Nobody wants to hear 24-7 about my crying children, although that seems to be my world," Buckham said.

**Solution:** Develop your own interests and keep up with current events so you can hold your own around the watercooler. If your colleagues roll their eyes at the mention of the word "onesie," then it's time to change the subject.



Photos.com

## Is parental flexibility unfair?

New York Times

If the boss allows an employee to leave early to take his children to the doctor, is the boss being fair to everyone else who still has to work a full day?

Is it fair to offer a working mother a flexible schedule but not provide the same option to a woman without children? A growing number of childless workers are answering no to questions like these, prompting *HR* magazine to ask in a cover story: "Are You Too Family Friendly?"

It's an issue because of the changing U.S. population.

"Slightly more than 1 in 4 households, 26 percent, consisted of a person living alone in 2006, up from 17 percent in 1970," Susan J. Wells writes. "Unmarried and single U.S. residents numbered 92-million in 2006, making up 42 percent of all people 18 and older." That's up from 89-million in 2005.

As a result, family-friendly benefits are starting to generate a backlash. "Childless singles feel ... exploited — whether because of fewer benefits, less compensation, longer hours, mandatory overtime or less flexible schedules or leaves — by married and child-rearing co-workers," Wells writes.

Wells says one solution that has worked well for some companies is offering a cafeteria-style list of benefits from which employees can choose.

## A difficult job skill to master: listening

Wall Street Journal

You've likely heard this criticism in a job-performance review: "You need to be a better listener."

But how?

It takes time and effort, which isn't easy in an age of interruption, says Jennifer Grau, who conducted a two-day class recently on the "The Power of Listening" at Cornell University's school of Industrial Labor Relations.

Grau says that bad listeners tend to tune out dry subjects, get into arguments, fake attention, react to emotional words and daydream.

While allegedly listening, they often are rehearsing what they're about to say, grab every conversational opening and scout for flaws in an argument.

The path to better listening, Grau says, begins with the

readiness to listen.

"Sometimes the hardest part of listening," she says, "is the mental part of getting yourself willing."

Listening to understand has three key elements:

- Involved silence (eye contact, vocal encouragement).
- Probes (supportive inquiry using questions like "what" as opposed to the "why").
- Paraphrasing ("What I think you said is ..."). This step shouldn't simply be spitting back what people say, but integrating information about the speaker's attitudes, 55 percent of which is communicated through body language.

When you consider that these skills are culled from a much longer list, it's clear that listening takes a lot of time. "There are no boring subjects," Grau says, "just unskillful listeners."

A final bit of advice: Try out these skills at home.

# \* RISING STAR

WEEKLY PROFILE OF  
A TAMPA BAY YOUNG  
PROFESSIONAL

## Patrick Donlin

Sr. Account Manager,  
EdgeRock Technology Partners

BS, Marketing  
Oswego State University of  
New York



**Q: What do you do in your day job?**

**A:** I facilitate Oracle consulting engagements between consultants and clients for IT projects nationwide. Also, I am heavily involved in all marketing and trade show events for our company as we continue to increase our brand image.

**Q: When you were five, what did you want to be when you grew up?**

**A:** Shortstop for the New York Yankees.

**Q: If you weren't in your current profession, what career would you want?**

**A:** I would like to work for the government as an international diplomat. I really enjoy each cultural detail involved with international business and government.

**Q: If you could trade places with anyone in the world for a day, who would it be? Why?**

**A:** (The illusionist) David Blaine, (because) he understands people better than they understand themselves. He has an impressive ability to reach each person's point of amazement and bring out the wonder of a child in each person he meets.

**Q: What's your favorite quote?**

**A:** "If you don't make mistakes, you're not working on hard enough problems. And that's a big mistake."  
— Frank Wilczek, 2004 Nobel Prize winner in physics

**Q: What's the best advice you've ever received? Who told it to you? How have you applied it to your life?**

**A:** When I was 7 years old my mother told me "Don't sweat the small stuff, and it is all small stuff." With that advice I have been able to take on any challenge and realize I can do what it takes to be successful.

**Q: What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?**

**A:** I moved to Argentina when I was 23 and did not understand 10 words in Spanish. After a lot of practice, I am now fluent.

**Q: Who or what always makes you laugh?**

**A:** Homer Simpson

Rising Star is a weekly feature created by the tbt\* marketing department. For consideration, e-mail [mary@tampabay.com](mailto:mary@tampabay.com) or call 727-893-8070.