

Extraordinary Woman

BY ANGELA ARDOLINO

A small-town girl with big dreams – that's how Shari Mezrah describes herself. Well, the Columbia, Mo., native and mother of two has made her dreams come true and is helping other parents dream too, literally. Any new parent knows that sleep is a precious commodity and Mezrah, a sleep schedule specialist, created BabyTIME to help moms and dads get some zzzs. Her first book, *The Baby Sleeps Tonight – Your Infant Sleeps through the Night by 9 Weeks*, is hitting bookstores and she's excited to bring rest back to weary new moms.

Q: How did you get the idea for BabyTIME?
A: I became pregnant with my son Maxwell in 1998. At the time, I had a consulting business coaching executives in public speaking. After giving birth, I started doing research and created BabyTIME. I began working as a sleep schedule specialist and developed strategies to help parents get their babies to sleep through the night.

Q: What is the secret to your success?
A: Being passionate about what I do and believing in myself are my strongest attributes. I also have a very strong work ethic.

Q: What is your biggest fear?
A: I strive not to be afraid of anything. I try to turn fear into opportunity and focus on the things I can control.

Q: What goals have you set for yourself?
A: I would like to grow my business and use my talents to contribute to the community.

Q: What advice would you offer other women entrepreneurs?
A: Believe in yourself and follow your instincts. There are lessons to be learned all the time; so give yourself permission to make mistakes. And use every day as a chance to learn something new.

Q: What is your proudest moment?
A: There are two moments for me -- bringing my children, Maxwell and Samantha, into the world.

Q: What is your biggest achievement?
A: My book. I feel extremely fortunate to

become a published author.

Q: What is motherhood like for you?
A: Being a mom is everything to me. I live for my family.

Q: How do you balance motherhood and work?
A: One day at a time. I try to maintain my cool at all times. We practice taking three deep breaths in my family before reacting, especially when we've had a long day and can be irritable.

Q: What is your favorite thing about Tampa?
A: The best thing is I have really great friends. Plus, in Tampa everything is 30 minutes away or less. My office is five miles from my home and that's very good for my car.

Q: What are your favorite things to do with your children in the Tampa Bay area?
A: We love going out to dinner with the kids and taking them to special events and concerts. Max and Sam also love going to the Florida State Fair every year and the Wagon Wheel Flea Market.

Q: What are your favorite restaurants for the whole family?
A: Actually, we have a top four. Pho Quyên is the best (great Vietnamese). We go to Beef O' Brady's with our playgroup. Bern's Steak House is wonderful. CK's revolving rooftop restaurant at the Tampa International Airport Marriott Hotel is such a great place to eat, watch planes and watch the sunset.

Q: Who has been your biggest inspiration?
A: My husband Todd is my stronghold. He has an incredible amount of inner strength and always supports me. His commitment to his work is so admirable and he still makes time to play with his kids and wife. He has a deep appreciation for life.

Q: What makes you happy?
A: When I help people it gives me a sense of inner peace. Making others happy makes me happy.

Q: How do you relax and rejuvenate yourself?
A: I love to make plans -- taking road trips and

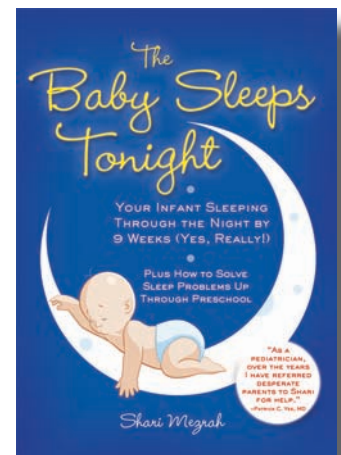
going camping with my family. I enjoy going to the movies. Retail therapy is really beneficial, too, and I love to find that great bargain.

Q: What is something people don't know about you?
A: I have a snack every night before I go to sleep. I also keep a pad of paper and pen next to my bed to write down notes or reminders. I have been doing this since I was 12 years old.

Q: What message would you like to give to women?
A: Get involved. You can make a difference. Find that special passion or charity that fulfills you and get going.

Q: What would you like to see in Tampa's future?
A: I would love to see downtown alive at night and on weekends. We are getting there with the openings of the Tampa Museum of Art and the Glazer Children's Museum. The park is fabulous. My kids love it. But we need more businesses and restaurants and more festivals and street fairs. We have an awesome downtown.

Q: What final thoughts would you like to leave parents with?
A: Everything in life is manageable. It's how you choose to react that will set the pace.



Shari's new book, *The Baby Sleeps Tonight* is available at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.



Shari Mezrah pictured with her husband Todd and their two children Max and Samantha in their home.

Photo by: Jeanine McLeod