



A Ticket to Write

by Jessica Ullian

AT FIRST, the new coworking space in my neighborhood didn't seem promising. Two doors down the hall from a hypnotist's office, it had a six-seat worktable, one small conference room, and a high-tech coffeemaker that the owner permitted no one else to operate. But the first day was free and the coffee was hot, so I accepted a mug and took a spot at the table one morning late last spring. Even if it didn't work out, I figured, I'd be saving a few bucks on that day's caffeine.

Within weeks, I had happily paid \$250 of my hard-won freelance income—a quarter of what I had earned from my last writing assignment—for a 10-pack of day passes.

Why would I pay for a coworking space when I had a public library and five coffee shops all within half a mile of my home? When I left a full-time job in 2009 to write freelance, I considered an office a laughable indulgence. Then I had my first child, and in the eyes of the world my career became the indulgence. Former colleagues referred to me as a new mom, not as a journalist. Friends asked about babysitting rates instead of my assignments. The implication was clear: All my work would now be judged against how much time it took away from my children. As an anxious new parent, I internalized this message. Over the next few years I cut back on my writing to minimize its impact on my family—and, in the process, ensured it wouldn't have any impact at all.

When both of my kids were finally in school, I expected to jump right back into my work. But my writing



muscles had atrophied, along with my confidence. Instead of focusing on work, I spent my child-free hours thinking about my home and family obligations. A change of scenery, I thought, could push me out of my rut.

The first time I walked into the coworking space, I shut the door on everything but my writing. The room was small and quiet, its clean minimalism in sharp contrast to my toy-cluttered house and the loud local cafés. My new colleagues

were welcoming and eager to chat about goals, which quickly made me realize how little time I had spent setting them. With the encouragement of my deskmates—who included a writing teacher, an architect, and a writer/web designer/interior designer—I began brainstorming, pitching, and publishing again. By the time I used up my first 10-pack (I'm now on my second), I had finished two new paid jobs and signed contracts for three more.

That first \$250 I spent on coworking wasn't only an expense. It was an affirmation that working and mothering weren't going to be an either/or choice. My writing deserved my time and attention, and I needed to acknowledge that truth by investing in a workspace that didn't double as a playroom or lunch spot. The money bought me more than a seat at the table; it bought me 10 full days given over to writing. It was worth every penny.

They let me make the coffee now too. **M**

Jessica Ullian, who lives in the Boston area, is a freelance writer and editor for nonprofit and higher education publications.

ALAMY (CHAIR); GETTY (LAPTOP)

STORY CODE	SPE.01.17 LOCAL1
SHIP DATE	012/08/16
STORY NAME	Money Well Spent
PAGES	1 of 1
MOCKUP	1A

DISTRIBUTION	
TOP EDITOR	
SENIOR EDITOR	Mannes
WRITER(S)	Ullian
REPORTERS	
PHOTO	
DESIGNERS	Bailey

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

EMAIL PDF
JESSICAULLIAN@GMAIL.COM