

RETURNING TO WORK: FINDING YOUR EQUILIBRIUM

New Parents Off to a Good Start

Going back to work after becoming a new parent is a process that takes time. In addition to caring about your job and career, you now care for a tiny human being, which can feel like a full time job in and of itself. Though the balance of your priorities may shift back and forth as you find your equilibrium, feel confident that this is all a part of the refining process that makes you both a wonderful parent AND employee.

Begin with patience and grace towards yourself: Your priorities and values may completely shift after becoming a parent. It can be hard to reintegrate all that's new into a space that was well-established beforehand. Give yourself time to adapt. Even if you're not physically with your baby, you may feel mentally and emotionally like you're in two places at once. Be patient with yourself as you re-evaluate what it looks like to be a working parent.

The first few weeks back can especially feel like a shock to the system. Try finding ways to maintain perspective. Check in with yourself at the end of each week to see how things went a little smoother than the week before. Look for support groups at work or talk with other parents who have navigated this transition.

Build trust with your caregiver: Trust grows over time, which is why leaving your baby with someone new can be especially hard. Even if your caregiver is a trusted family member or friend, it can still take time to build up your confidence in their ability to take good care of your little one. Start the trust building process as early as possible. Work to establish good communication and expectations. Try a few practice runs of leaving your baby in their care before going back. For additional support on finding the right childcare, EAP can help!

Set clear expectations and discuss boundaries with your workplace: It takes time to get back up to speed after returning to work. It's ok to set expectations and discuss boundaries during your transition back. It may not be the best time to take on multiple big projects or be expected to stay late without notice. Be clear about what would help the transition to show you're proactive and dedicated to doing your job, even if it means you need some extra support to start.

A new you for the job: It may not feel like it right away, but this whole parenting business brings lots of new skills and qualifications to the workplace. Becoming a parent flexes your time management skills as you handle many new responsibilities. Problem-solving skills can grow as charting the unknown is now a daily exercise. You may also find your ability to empathize has increased as you attune to your baby's emotions and wellbeing. All of these strengths can make you a better employee and leader in the workplace.

Return to work checklist:

- › Talk with your manager/HR before returning.
- › If you'll be pumping, work with your manager to determine an appropriate place to do so and discuss timing.
- › Make sure your baby is used to taking a bottle.
- › Have a daycare practice run.
- › Stock some easy, ready-to-go meals for the first week back.