



PARENTAL LEAVE POWER UP:

A Practical Playbook for Expecting *Physicians*

josie*



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READ ONE THING

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TL/DR: If you only read *one* thing.

IT'S A BUSY TIME - WE GET IT! FOR THE TIME-PRESSED, HERE IS A SUGGESTED PUNCH LIST OF WHAT TO DO BEFORE LEAVE:

- **Plan for Clinical and Administrative Coverage:** Coordinate with your department to ensure all patient care, administrative duties, and on-call responsibilities are appropriately covered during your leave.
- **Familiarize Yourself with Available Benefits:** Many parents often overlook available benefits. Investing 10 minutes to speak with your HR team can go a long way. Commonly overlooked examples include new parent support groups / employee resource groups, lactation supports, childcare benefits, mental health benefits, Employee Assistant Programs (EAPs) and Flexible Spending Accounts.
- **Prepare a Communication Strategy:** Outline how and when you will transition responsibilities to your team and decide how much, if any, contact you want to maintain during leave. Name a trusted peer or two to keep you in the loop on critical items or updates during your leave.
- **Organize Handoffs and Documentation:** Ensure all patient cases, ongoing projects, and administrative work are up-to-date and easy for colleagues to access.
- **Collaborate on a Re-Entry Plan:** Work with your department lead(s) on your return-to-work timeline, potential phased re-entry, and adjustments you may need during the transition back.



Self-Reflection: It's Good for the *Soul*

HAVING A BABY IS A BIG LIFE TRANSITION - LOTS OF CHANGES, LOTS OF NEW BEGINNINGS, AND LOTS OF DIAPERS!

SELF-REFLECTION NOTES:

Life transitions, like parental leave, offer a chance to pause and reflect on what truly matters to you. As you prepare for your leave, here are a few questions to guide your thinking:

- What's most important to you in your roles as a physician, parent-to-be, partner, and leader? Take a moment to reflect on which aspects of your identity feel most central right now and how they might shift during this transition.
- What personal values will help ground you through this change? Consider how these values can guide you in balancing your professional and personal priorities.
- How do you envision your upcoming leave? Think about what you want it to look like—for your family, your colleagues, and yourself.



AS YOU REFLECT ON THESE QUESTIONS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU SET AN INTENTION FOR YOUR LEAVE. AN INTENTION IS SOMETHING THAT CAN HELP ANCHOR YOU AS YOU NAVIGATE LEAVE AND CAN HELP YOU MAINTAIN A HEALTHY PERSPECTIVE.

Need some inspiration? Here are some examples that our clients at Josie created in the past:

- “I will strive to be present for my baby during this time together, while also remembering to care for myself.”
- “I will practice asking for help and being okay with the messy days.”
- “I will use this time to think about my values as a parent, provider, and partner.”
- “I will be kind to myself and remember there is no perfect way to parent.”

MY PARENTAL LEAVE INTENTION STATEMENT:



Want a fancy,
easy-on-the-
eyes version
of *your*
intention
statement?

Email hello@myjosie.com and we will send you a digital version of your statement like the one below.



Massella's Parental Leave Intention Statement:

I WILL STRIVE TO BE PRESENT IN THIS
UNIQUE AND PRECIOUS TIME WHILE BEING
ATTUNED TO WHO I AM, MY NEEDS, AND THE
ABILITY TO ADJUST AND CHANGE. I WILL GIVE
MYSELF THE FREEDOM TO FIND MY NEW SELF.

josie*



Let's *Talk* About

#WORKINGPARENTGOALS

A LITTLE PROACTIVE PLANNING WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR CAREER CAN GO A LONG WAY IN HELPING YOU FIND PEACE OF MIND. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS – AND REMEMBER, GOALS SHOULD BE ACHIEVABLE VS. ADDING ANY UNNECESSARY PRESSURE DURING THIS PHASE OF YOUR LIFE!

WHAT PROFESSIONAL GOALS DO YOU HAVE PRIOR TO LEAVE? (E.G., WRAP UP RESEARCH PROPOSAL, COMPLETE PATIENT HANDOFF PLANS)



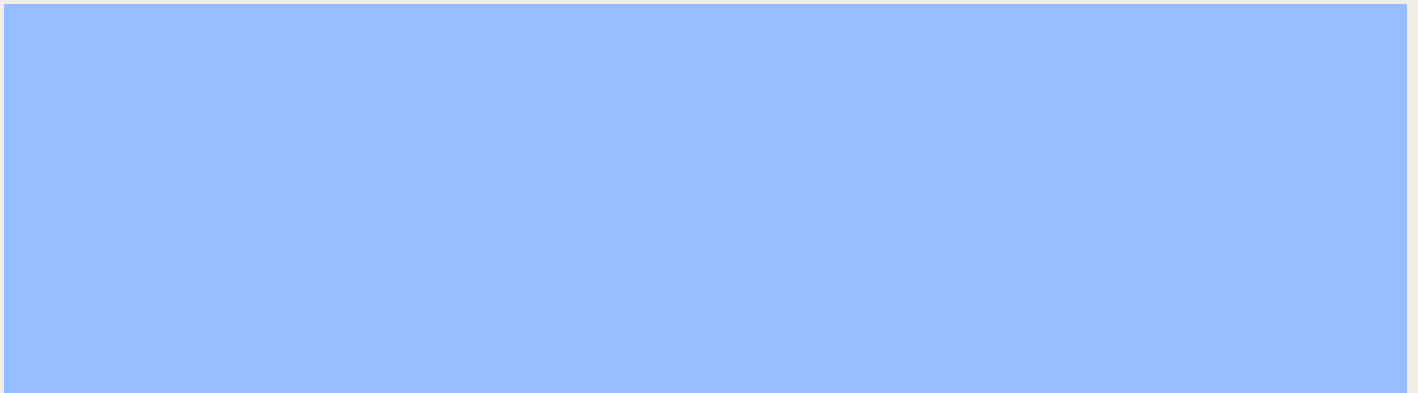
WHAT GOALS DO YOU HAVE UPON YOUR RETURN? (E.G., RAMP UP TO FULL PATIENT LOAD IN FIRST 6 MONTHS, ASSUME LEAD ROLE IN RESEARCH PROJECT)



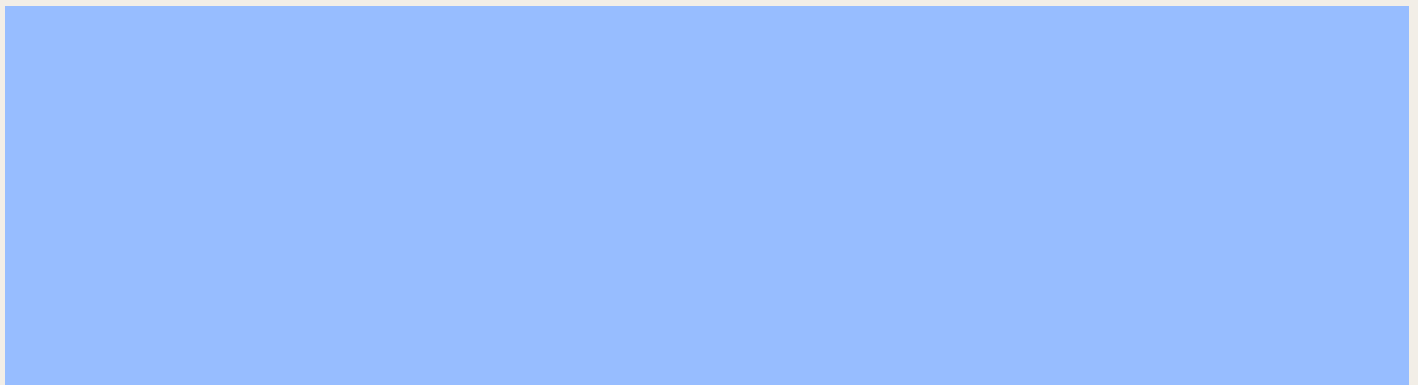


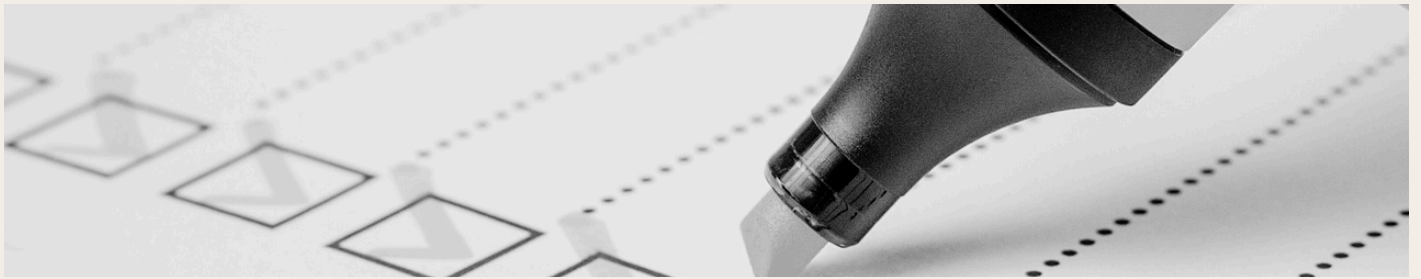
DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO BRING UP TO YOUR DEPT. LEAD AND/OR HR WHEN IT COMES TO THINGS LIKE...

- Coverage for your clinical, teaching, or administrative duties during leave?
- Expectations around communication during your time away (e.g., availability for urgent consults)?
- Scheduling lactation breaks or accessing designated spaces?
- Adjusting research deadlines or securing support for ongoing projects?



HOW WILL YOUR PROFESSIONAL GOALS AND PRIORITIES BE ADVOCATED FOR WHILE YOU ARE OUT (E.G., A PENDING PROMOTION)?

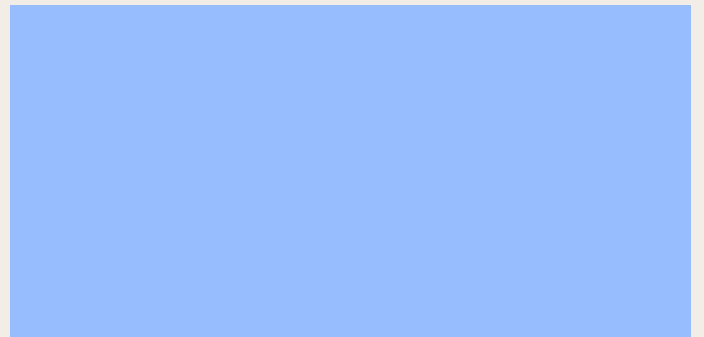




(good)
Relationships &
Communication
= the Key to
Unlocking a
Successful Leave

NOW THAT YOU'VE REFLECTED ON YOUR PRIORITIES AND GOALS, LET'S GET TACTICAL. CLEARLY COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AROUND YOUR LEAVE WITH YOUR TEAM, AND PATIENTS (IF APPLICABLE) WILL GO A LONG WAY TO ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER LEAVE. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR ME TO COMPLETE PRIOR TO LEAVE?



Josie musings: If you have a growing list of to-do's prior to leave, try mapping them out on a two by two chart, with the Y-axis being urgency and the X-axis being importance. Focus on the top-right activities, then have a conversation with your manager about it.

Phrases to try with your Department Lead:

"It's important to me that I make this transition as successful as possible for our team. Here's where I need to prioritize my time in the coming weeks to do so - what do you think?"

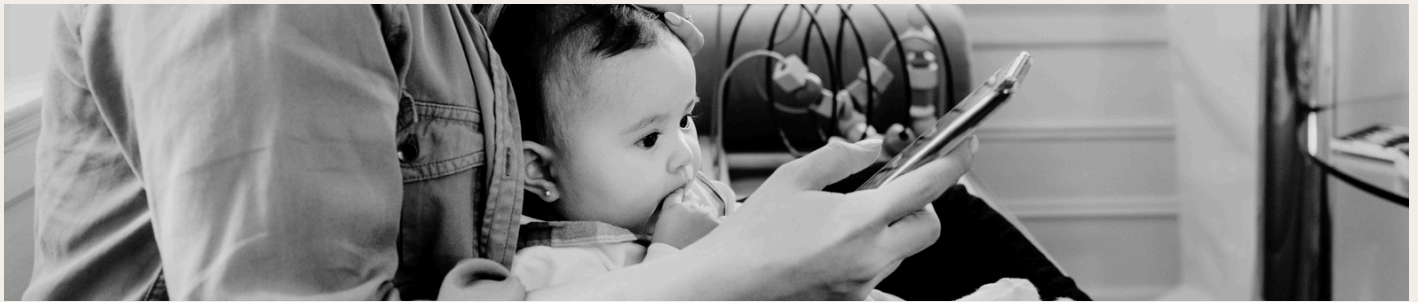
"I'd like to spend the coming weeks focusing on [insert top-right box activities], which will leave the team in a good spot as I transition into leave. For a few other items, I could use your help in determining which are mission critical prior to my leave."



WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE THINGS THAT HAVE TO HAPPEN WHILE I'M ON LEAVE?



Josie Musings: It can be tough to let go of control while you're away—we get it! Think about what truly matters most to you during your leave—what would give you peace of mind? For example, is it ensuring your patients are transitioned smoothly to colleagues? Completing critical documentation before your leave? Or knowing that a research project is on track? Whatever it is, narrow it down to just a few priorities, and proactively plan ways to address them in advance.



WHAT ARE YOUR COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES DURING LEAVE?

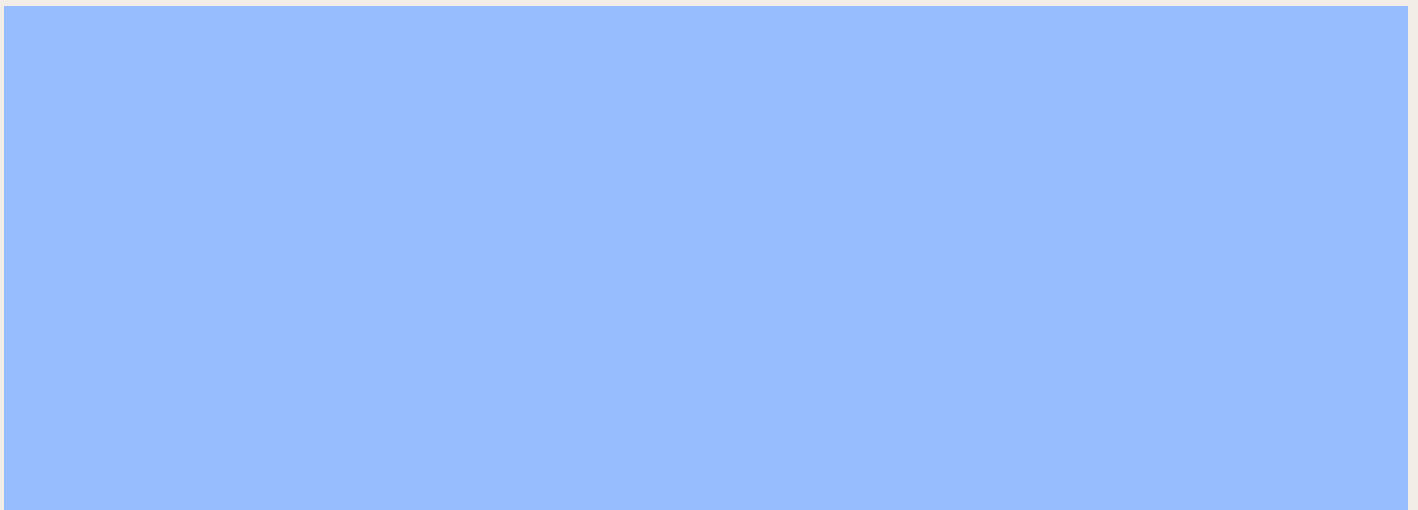
Josie Musings: We've seen it all—from physicians wanting to completely unplug during parental leave to those who prefer staying “in the loop” with updates on their team or department. There's no right way—only the way that gives you the most peace of mind.

Some things to consider:

- What will help me be most present with my baby during leave?
- Do I want to completely unplug from work? If so, what boundaries or systems can help me stay accountable to that?
- Would I like to stay informed about certain updates, such as major department changes, patient outcomes, key research milestones, or institutional announcements?
- If yes, who should share these updates with me, and how? (Email, text, or phone call?)
- Would a planned check-in with my department chair or team a few weeks before my return help me mentally “ease back” into my role?



WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS FOR MY RETURN TO WORK?



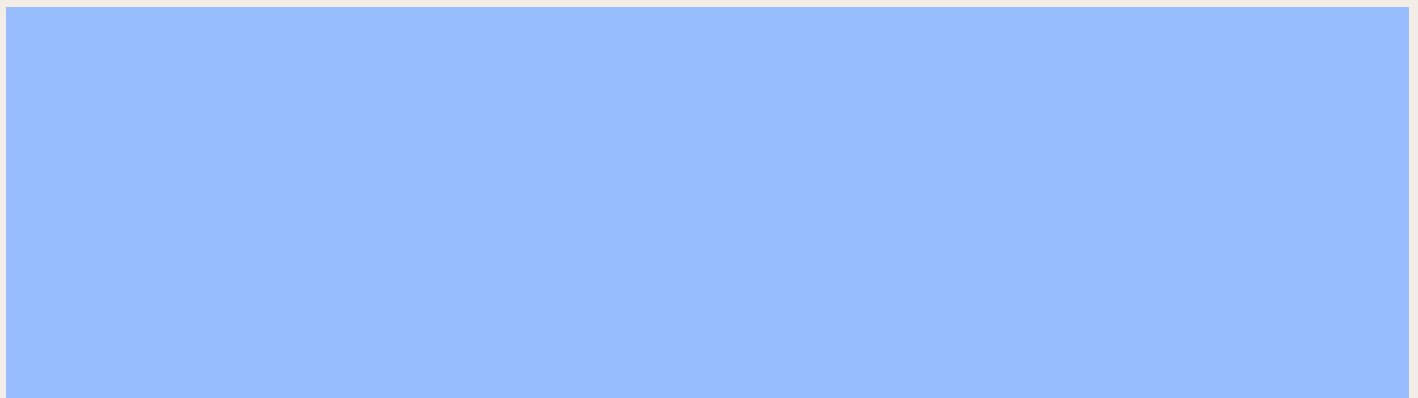
Josie Musings: The return to work—already?? Isn't it too soon to think about this? While it might feel far off, starting to envision what you'd like it to look like can actually help ease some of the uncertainty. Of course, if this feels overwhelming right now, take a breath and set it aside—this is meant to be a low-pressure exercise!

If you're ready to think about it (even just a little), here are a few things to consider:

- Do you want to return full time right away, or would a phased re-entry work better? What options might be available to you?
- Are there specific patient panels, research projects, teaching roles, or leadership responsibilities you'd like to prioritize upon your return?
- If your role involves travel (e.g., conferences), what are the expectations for resuming those commitments post-leave?



HOW AND WHEN WILL I SHARE MY TRANSITION PLAN WITH MY DEPARTMENT LEADER?



Josie musings: We recommend you start talking to your people leader about your transition plan as early as you are comfortable doing so. Having this plan in place will allow ample time for necessary conversations to happen, give your manager time to communicate and advocate for your needs, and help team members prepare as well. See the end of this section for a suggested agenda for this meeting.



HOW AND WHEN WILL I SHARE MY TRANSITION PLAN WITH MY COLLEAGUES?

A large, solid blue rectangular area, likely intended for a user to write their response to the question above.

Josie musings: For some items, it may be more appropriate for your department chair / lead or others to communicate the transfer of responsibility, while for others you may want to do it yourself. To help differentiate, consider the following:

- Am I comfortable with communicating this myself? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of the message coming from me vs. another?
- What opportunities are there to strengthen relationships with colleagues through this transition effort?



HOW AND WHEN WILL I SHARE MY TRANSITION PLAN WITH MY PATIENTS?



Josie Musings: This one can feel tricky—especially if you’ve built strong relationships with your patients or feel a deep sense of responsibility for their care. Not every physician approaches this the same way, and that’s okay. Our advice is to consider what feels most comfortable and appropriate for you.

For some, sharing the news earlier allows patients to adjust to the idea and address any concerns they may have about continuity of care. You might also want to introduce the colleagues who will be stepping in during your leave to help reassure patients about their care. For others, a more concise and professional communication may feel right.

Additionally, think about what, if any, contact you’d like with patients while on leave. Some physicians prefer to completely unplug, while others may choose to stay informed about critical cases or even share occasional updates with longtime patients, like a brief note or photo of their new baby.

At the end of the day, there’s no one-size-fits-all approach. Do what aligns best with your comfort level, your role, and what will bring you and your family peace of mind during this special time.



ONCE YOU'VE REFLECTED ON THESE QUESTIONS, WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU SET UP TIME WITH YOUR DEPARTMENT LEAD TO WALK THROUGH YOUR GOALS, NEEDS, AND ALIGN ON EXPECTATIONS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER YOUR PARENTAL LEAVE.

HERE IS A SUGGESTED AGENDA FOR THAT MEETING:

Suggested timing: ~8 - 12 weeks before your leave date

Duration: 30 minutes

1. Pre-leave priorities (and where you can use some help)
2. Align on expectations during leave (coverage, transition plan, etc.)
3. Communication plan and how your manager can support you
4. Communication preferences during leave
5. Align on return expectations (timing, re-assumption of key responsibilities, etc.)



The *Tactical* Things: Tools, Templates, Timing, etc.

IN THE APPENDIX, YOU WILL FIND BLANK TEMPLATES TO HELP YOU GET ORGANIZED FOR YOUR TIME AWAY. THESE CAN BE SHARED WITH YOUR DEPARTMENT LEAD AND/OR COLLEAGUES WHO MAY NEED TO BE IN THE KNOW. SOME THINGS YOU'LL WANT TO COMMUNICATE :

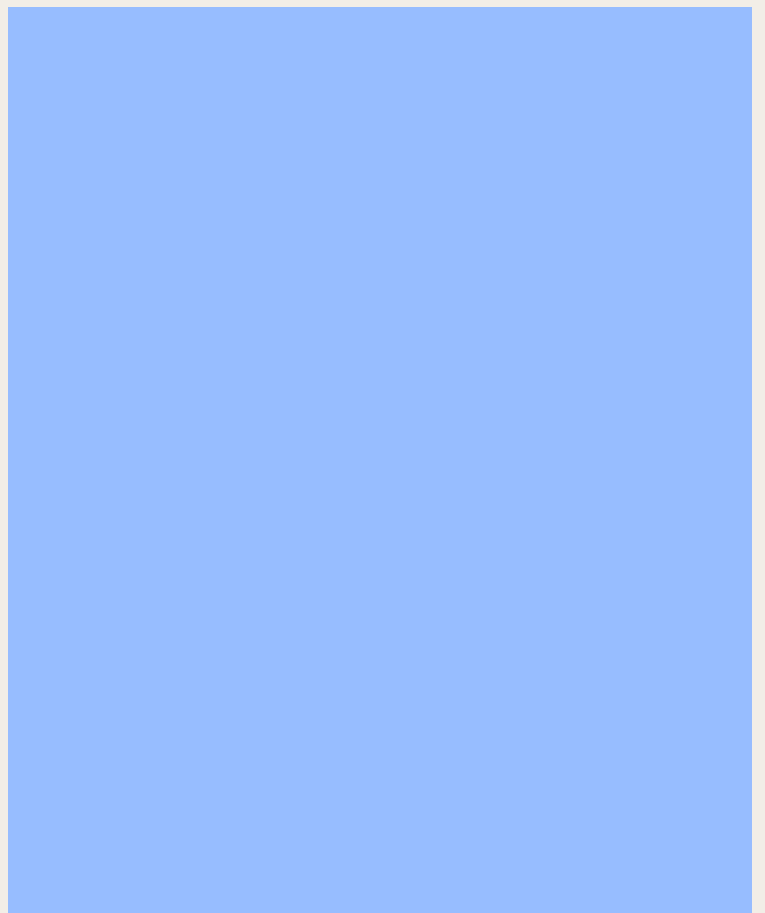
- **Logistics** - Due date, planned leave start date, planned return date, return plan / on ramping schedule
- **Communication and Information Flow** - intended accessibility / communication while on leave (frequency and by which mode of communication), emails / topics you wish to be copied on or updated on while away
- **Direct Reports / Mentees** - if applicable, identify who they will report to while you are out, and communicate with their interim manager the top 3-5 things they should know as they assume this temporary role
- **Recurring Meetings** - meetings you lead or participate in (dates, times, who is in charge while you are away)
- **Current Projects** - important deadlines, project status, contact information, responsible parties while you are away, contingency plans as needed

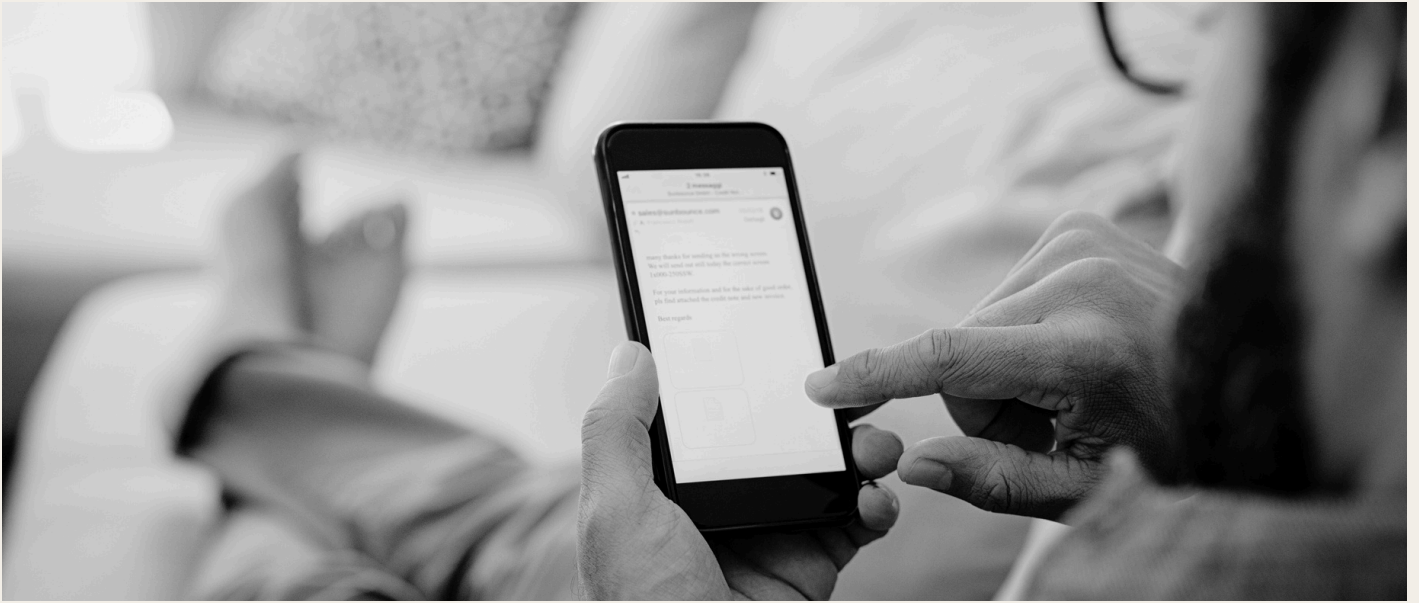


Don't Stop Believin': Making the Journey Into Working *Parenthood*

YOU'RE NEARLY THERE –
JUST A FEW MORE THINGS
TO THINK THROUGH:

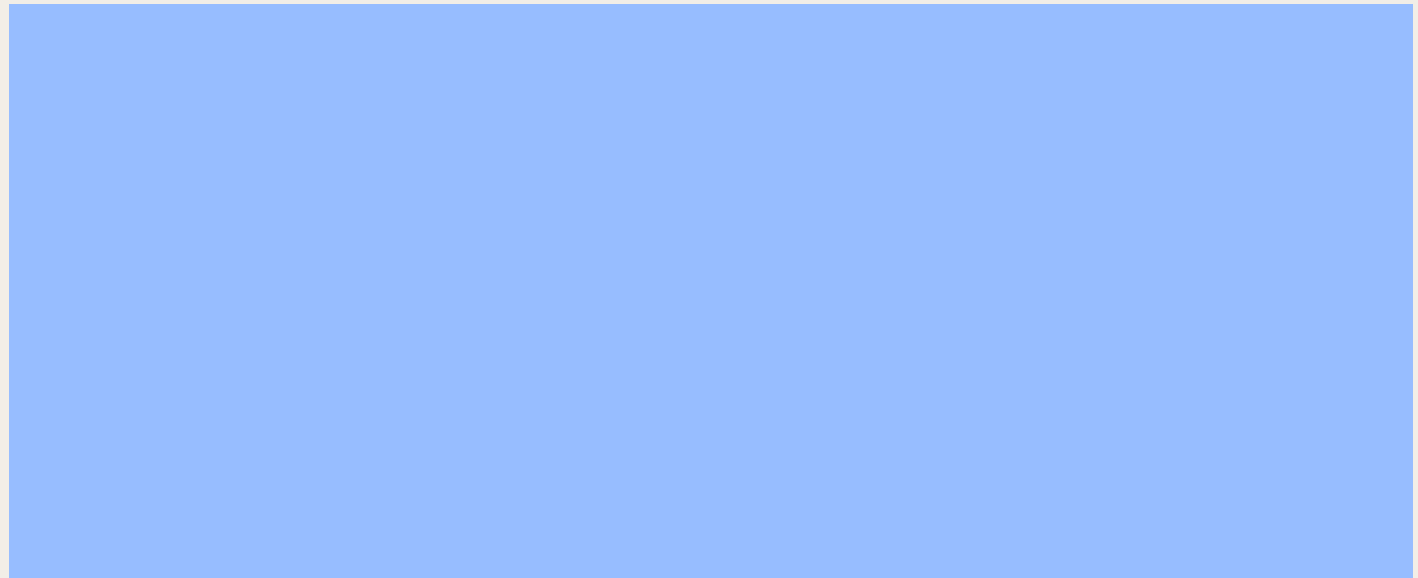
IF YOU HAVE A PARTNER, WILL THEY
BE TAKING TIME OFF? IS THERE
FLEXIBILITY IN WHEN THEY CAN
TAKE TIME OFF? WHAT WILL LEAVE
LOOK LIKE FOR THE BOTH OF YOU?





When preparing for the arrival of a new baby, many busy professionals sometimes forget to proactively plan to care for themselves during this life transition.

WHAT BRINGS YOU CALM AND HELPS YOU RELAX? WHAT HAS WORKED IN THE PAST TO ALLEVIATE STRESS, AND HOW CAN YOU BUILD THIS INTO YOUR LEAVE PLAN?





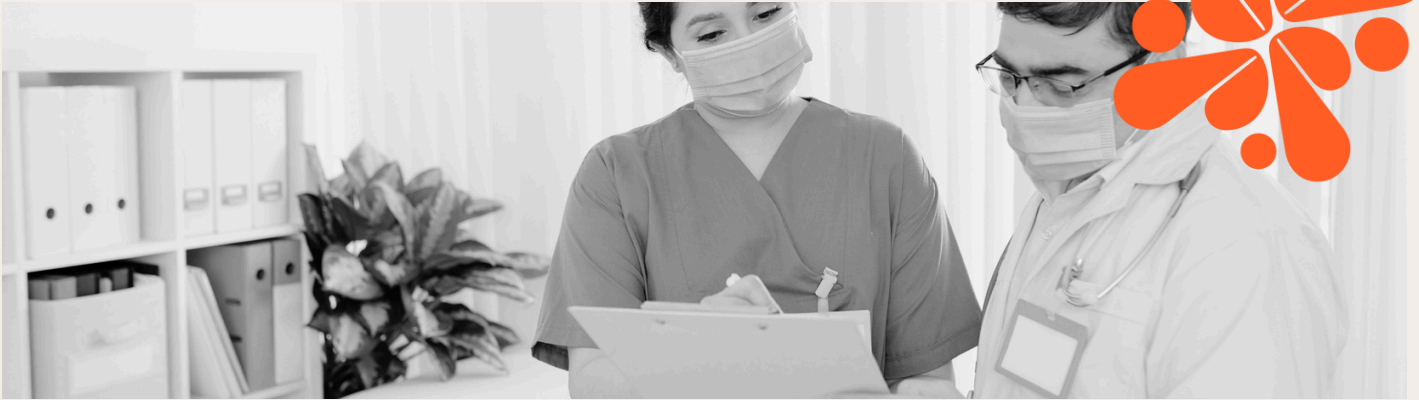
Appendix

JOSIE'S FAVORITE EMOTIONAL REGULATION TECHNIQUES FOR BUSY PARENTS

🙌 Gratitude List: Write out or mentally list 5 things that you are grateful for and/or bring you joy. As you list them out, take a moment to visualize each briefly and reflect on why you are grateful for that thing and/or why it brings you joy.

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34 5,4,3,2,1: Working backwards from 5, use your senses to list things you notice around you. For example, you might start by listing five things you can hear, then four things you can see, three things you can touch from where you are, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. There is no “right” order to do this!

❤️ Practice Self-Kindness: Repeat kind, compassionate phrases to yourself. Some examples include: “I’m doing the best I can with what I have in the current moment,” “I am setting a great example to my colleagues, children, and partner by being kind to myself.” Say these phrases, either aloud or in your head, as many times as you need.



Appendix

PRE-LEAVE PLANNING TEMPLATES

Use these templates to help you stay organized and prepare for parental leave! Duplicate, modify, and share as needed.

LOGISTICS / DETAILS TEMPLATE

- Due Date:
- Planned Leave Start Date:
- Length of Parental Leave:
- Planned Leave Return Date:
- Return Plan:





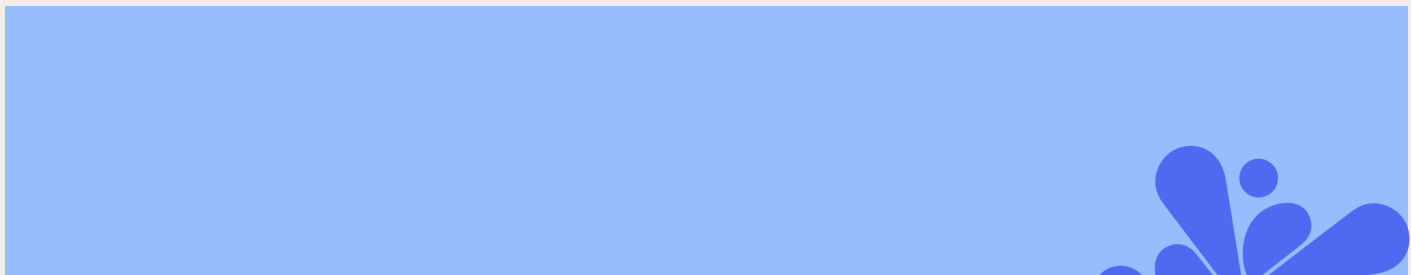
Appendix

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION FLOW TEMPLATE

Please CC my work email on the following issues:



Please reach out to my cell phone or personal email on the following issues:





Appendix

TEAM MEMBERS I MENTOR / SUPPORT

- Name:
- Who Will Cover While I am on Leave:
- Frequency of Meetings:
- Notes:

- Name:
- Who Will Cover While I am on Leave:
- Frequency of Meetings:
- Notes:



Appendix

RECURRING MEETINGS I ATTEND TEMPLATE

- Meeting:
- Lead:
- When It Meets:
- Who Is Involved:
- Status While I am Gone:
- Notes:

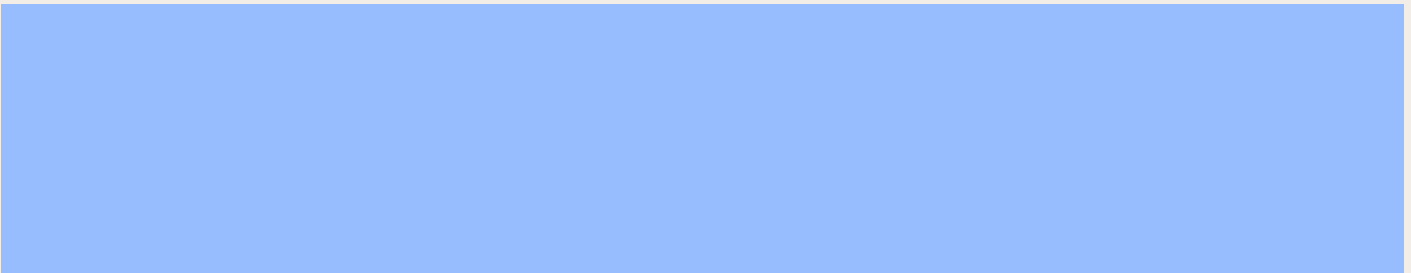
- Meeting:
- Lead:
- When It Meets:
- Who Is Involved:
- Status While I am Gone:
- Notes:



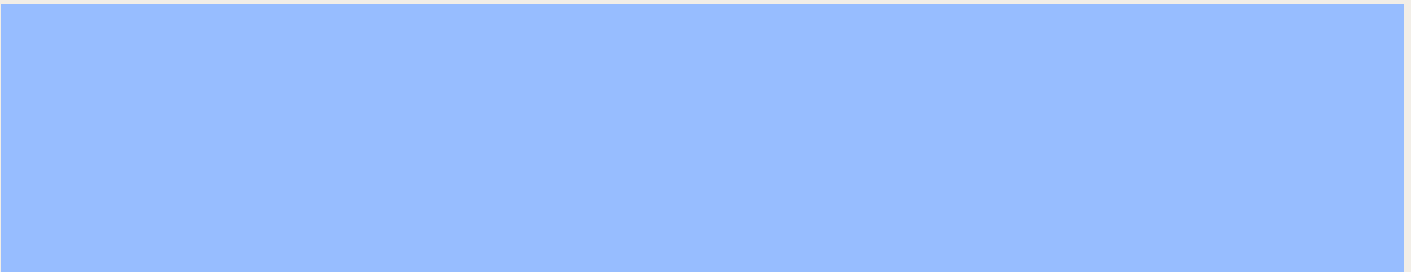
Appendix

CURRENT PROJECTS / TASKS / ACTIVITIES TEMPLATE

- What:
- Lead While I'm On Leave:
- Notes / Coverage Plan:



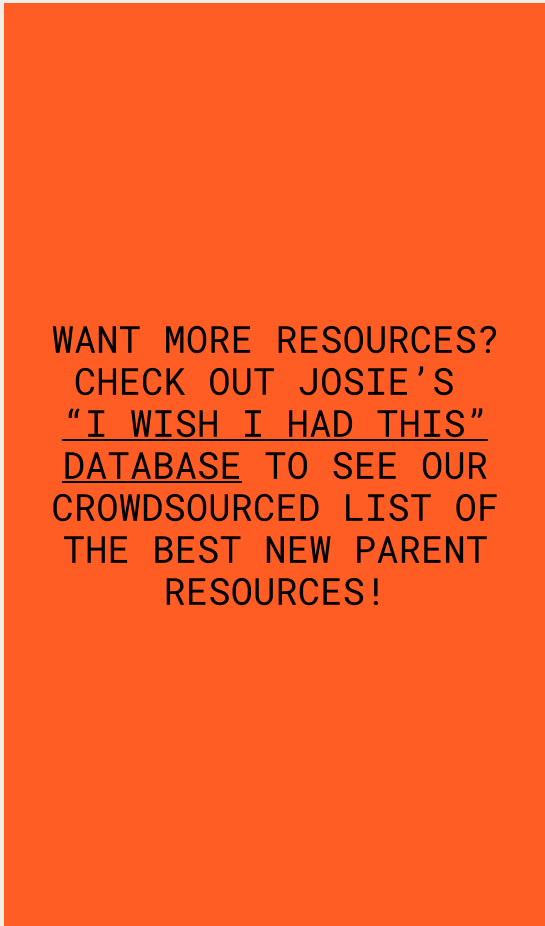
- What:
- Lead While I'm On Leave:
- Notes / Coverage Plan:





Appendix

GET BY WITH A LITTLE
HELP FROM MY FRIENDS:
JOSIE'S FAVORITE
RESOURCES



WANT MORE RESOURCES?
CHECK OUT JOSIE'S
"I WISH I HAD THIS"
DATABASE TO SEE OUR
CROWDSOURCED LIST OF
THE BEST NEW PARENT
RESOURCES!

Things to Listen To

- For the Data Lovers: Emily Oster's [Parent Data Podcast](#)
- For the Practical Advice Lovers: Dr. Becky's [Good Inside Podcast](#)
- For Navigating Toddlerhood: [Big Little Feelings Podcast](#)
- For the No-Nonsense Lovers: [Big Time Adulthood](#)
- For the Balance Seekers: [Work-Life Equation](#) by Paul Sullivan and Bright Horizons
- For the Modern Family: [Stork'd Podcast](#) (try [this episode](#) 😊)
- For the Real Talk Lovers: [We Can Do Hard Things](#) (try [this episode](#) 🤝)

Things to Read

- [The Fifth Trimester](#) by Lauren Smith Brody
- [Good Inside](#) by Dr. Becky Kennedy
- [Cribsheet](#) by Emily Oster
- [Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids](#) by Dr. Laura Markham

Things to Watch

- Karrie Locher's [Bringing Home Baby Course](#)
- [Working Moms](#) (Netflix)
- [Babies](#) (Netflix)

Self Care Favorites

- [Real Self-Care](#) by Pooja Lakshmin
- [Mom-Care Oasis](#) by DeAnna Taylor
- [The Company of Dads](#) by Paul Sullivan



HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Get in touch with team Josie:



hello@myjosie.com



[Josie](#)



[@myjosieinc](#)



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josie*