

So You're *Back*.

A Working Parent's Best Practices
for the First Day, Week, Month
Post Parental Leave



Returning to work after parental leave is... *a lot*. You've just spent weeks or months learning how to keep a tiny human alive, and now you're supposed to remember your email password? Welcome to Level 2 of the game: Working Parent Edition. Here's your unofficial but very real guide to surviving (and maybe even enjoying!) your first day, week, and month back on the job.



The First Day

LOWER THE BAR. EVEN LOWER.

Start small. *Your only job today is to show up*, figure out how to work a keyboard again, and try not to cry at your desk (but if you do, that's ok!).

Wear real pants, but don't push it. Comfort is key! Or at least wear something that doesn't have spit-up on it... This is your new dress code.

Reintroduce yourself. People may say "You look great!" and "How's the baby?" It's ok to just smile, nod - and remember you're allowed to *redirect the conversation* if you're not feeling it.

Have a go-to out-of-office escape route. Bathroom, hallway, stairwell - somewhere you can take five and *breathe* if things get overwhelming.



The First Week

MANAGE EXPECTATIONS LIKE A PRO

You're not "back to normal" because you're finding your new rhythm. It might be messy and that's ok.

Block your calendar. Use that "catch-up time" liberally to familiarize yourself with all the things.

Practice saying no. A lot. The impulse to prove you haven't lost your edge is strong. Delegate and prioritize. Use phrases like "Let's revisit in a couple weeks."

Build a pumping/childcare/handoff buffer zone. Pad your time for feeding and drop-off's - time moves differently with a baby!

Find your people. Other parents at work can be a lifeline. Ask them what helped. Ask them what didn't. And use this advice to figure what works best for you.



The First Month

REDEFINE SUCCESS

Redraw your lines. Boundaries are your best friend. Decide when you're logging off and stick to it. No one gets a gold star for answering emails at midnight.

Celebrate the wins. Made it to a meeting on time? Huge. Got through the day feeling slightly less overwhelmed? Victory.

Communicate clearly and often. With your manager, your team, your partner at home. You're juggling more, so don't assume people know what you need.

Practice radical grace. For yourself, your baby, your colleagues, and that stranger who made a weird comment.

Remember, you're still *you*. You haven't lost your ambition, talent, or identity. You've just added "parent" to the mix, and that's a flex, not a flaw.

There's no one right way to return to work after leave. It's going to be bumpy and beautiful and a little bit bizarre. But you're not alone, and you're doing better than you think. Keep showing up, asking for help, and trusting that you're building something meaningful at home and at work. You've got this!

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

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