



Returning to Work After Parental Leave

A fast-paced work environment may be a bit of a shock to new parents. There's no baby around to coo at and cherish. The fact that life goes on at work much as it did before, independent of your child's birth, may seem incomprehensible. For these reasons, it makes sense to plan in advance for your return to work after parental leave.

Prepare for Re-Entry

- ✓ Keep on top of what's happening at work while you're away. Start preparing yourself mentally several weeks before you return. Drop by the office or have lunch with a colleague to re-acquaint yourself with the people and the environment. Visualize the changes that will occur in your life and your child's life when you go back to work.
- ✓ Think about your work goals, intentions and strategies before you return to work. Be realistic about your time requirements. Estimate how long your day's activities will take, then add an hour. Stick to your agreement to return on the day to which you agreed.
- ✓ Enlist your spouse's involvement in your transition from home to work. You may need more than occasional help with housework. This is a good time to delegate household responsibilities, such as a week's food shopping and meal planning. Plan who you will call for different types of emergencies.
- ✓ Select and start child care before you return to work so you can observe your child's reactions and your own feelings about the arrangement.

Back at the Job

While your baby is the most marvelous creature in the world in your eyes, he or she is slightly less miraculous to your coworkers. Your colleagues may occasionally want to see pictures and meet your little one, but resist the temptation to talk about your baby too much.

Be prepared for the fact that your coworkers may treat you differently if you're a new parent. If you're a new mother recovering from your baby's birth, your boss may be cautious about overloading you with work assignments. Gently reassure him or her that you're capable and eager to work.

Your re-entry will be smoother if you meet separately with your subordinates and supervisors to catch up on business. The information you gain from these meetings will help you create new work strategies. Keep in mind that your replacement may feel angry and threatened by your return. If you

sense this is happening, confront these feelings and make sure the channels of communication stay open. Minimize work-related problems that occurred in your absence or during your transition.

Good luck with your transition to the workplace. The ease with which you rejoin the workplace will contribute to a positive atmosphere for employees who take parental leaves in the future.

