

Going back to work after maternity leave? Keep these 5 things in mind...

PREGNANCY TIPS AND ARTICLES

ARTICLE

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For working mums, juggling motherhood and work life may be overwhelming. By planning, practising these tips, and taking a day at a time, you'll be able to manage your day and emotions better.
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Mums, motherhood is an on-going journey that will continue even when your baby has grown up. So before you find yourself caught between your mum responsibilities and work life, prepare yourself for this grand transition.

As soon as a woman conceives, she embarks upon an amazing life-long journey that is marked with many cherish-able, as well as challenging times. Pregnancy and motherhood change a woman's life completely, at times testing her to the utmost.

One such challenge comes in the life of a working mum, when she has to wake up from this dream-like phase and get ready to face reality. In some cases, mums need to resume their professional life even when their baby is still quite small. The very thought of leaving your little one in someone else's care to immerse yourself in work can give panic attacks to many a mum.

Hold on, and take a deep breath! When you think about it calmly, you will agree that with advance planning, preparations and arrangements, you can easily succeed at this humongous task. This transition can take place with reasonable ease and comfort for you, your baby, as well as your loved ones.

Here's how you can make this work for you and everyone around you:

(1) Have a plan and then also a backup plan!

Mums, according to a newspaper article, planning is the key and its importance cannot be asserted enough. Mostly, the date of resuming work is pre-decided, but many times it can be altered. Start back-planning everything to roughly 2 or 3 weeks before your maternity leave ends.

Joining mid-week can be more manageable to begin with. That way, you can get a weekly off sooner as compared to if you join on a Monday and it might be easier for you and your baby to handle each other's absence. Start speaking to your boss or manager a month before you plan to resume. Get an idea about the work load and timings from them.

Also keep in mind the age of your baby and how well he or she can adjust to new routines. A crucial decision that you may want to take is, whether you want to leave your baby at daycare or with any of your family members.

Besides that, there could be small, temporary concerns, such as your baby's sickness or unavailability of the caretakers. Prepare accordingly and also have a backup plan for this kind of situations. You may want to ask for your partner to chip in when there's an emergency. Give them a clear idea about it.

Once you are done with all your homework, chalk out a routine for yourself and get ready to apply it.

(2) Start falling into a routine beforehand

As soon as you have your schedule planned, it's time to follow it. This will help everyone get used to the routine and you will be able to identify its flaws, if any.

So, for example, if you are planning to leave your little one at the daycare, start leaving him or her there. You could begin with lesser duration and then increase it to the actual time required.

Adjust your baby's naptime, feeding as per the decided schedule. Get your baby used to either formula milk or feed, or if you are feeding breast milk, use bottles. Express milk as per your schedule and store it.

In case you expect your partner to pick up the baby or drop off the baby, set that timing as well. While doing all this, check if your decided routine suits the baby and you.

Mums, if you find that some of the things you decided aren't going according to your plan, you can amend the routine. Remember to be creative and not have hard and fast expectations from yourself.

(3) Make a checklist

You could have been a superwoman before the birth of your baby and it's highly probable that you still are one, but don't leave important things to memory. If you are already a new mum, you won't disagree with this.

A checklist is extremely important, mums. Right from what to add to your baby's bag to your own to-do things, the checklist can be a great anchor for you, as life will continue to get crazier.

Here are a few things that you may want to add to your checklist...

- Clothes for you and your baby with matching accessories.
- If you are breastfeeding, make sure you are expressing the milk and have enough supplies.
- Baby's bag: Clothes, blanket, toys, diapers or nappies, wet wipes, food, formula or milk to last the entire day, bibs, medicines and so on.
- Your bag: Food, medicines, important work related files if any, breast pumps if you are expressing milk, nursing pads if you would like to wear at work, to mention a few.
- Household to-do things like paying bills and so on.

You can edit the list to suit your needs. However, these are a few basic things that you must keep track of.

(4) Allow others to take up their roles and responsibilities

One of the most important keys to an easy transition from being on maternity leave to being back at work is the help and support of your family. Divide responsibilities and let others take them up.

If the family members are to look after the baby in your absence, allow them to do so even in your presence. You might want to make most of your remaining days at home by keeping your bub to yourself, but it's equally important for your little one to get accustomed to others.

If you plan to leave your baby at the daycare, do not visit him or her in between. That

could emotionally disturb the child and he or she may never get adjusted to the daycare.

Allowing others to help you will take off a lot of burden from you and leave you with more me-time.

(5) Take some time off to reconnect with your ‘working self’

Slowly, start getting into the groove. Call your colleagues, bosses or managers and understand from them the present scenario. Start checking your old emails and picking threads. This initial communication will help you easily mingle with your colleagues and adjust to the office environment once again.

Remember mums, that as much as you try to make your plans fool proof, you might miss out on something and as a result you could land in a situation. Most important would be to avoid panic and not to distress yourself or others. For example, your nanny may call sick or your little one may not let you leave for work, keeping you busy with his or her antics and so on.

Expect the unexpected and this could help you deal with unwarranted circumstances. Here's what you can do to steer clear through such incidents, quite common in a new mum's life:

- First and foremost, do not panic. Remember that when calm, you can think better.
- If you are with your baby, don't forcibly separate him or her from you.
According to experts,¹ understanding and attending to the cries of your baby is crucial for their development. Calm your baby down and then, hand him or her over to the caretaker, making sure that the baby is at peace before you two separate, even though for a few hours.
- Inform the concerned people about your situation. If you are at home, call your boss or manager and talk to them. Give them a clear picture. Vice versa, if you are at work, handling a professional crisis let your partner or family know about it.
- If you are feeding breast milk to your baby, make sure you have supplies enough to last a day.
- Have cordial relations with people at work, as well as the others who are caretakers for your baby. People are mostly willing to help new mums if any crisis arises. Feel free to ask for assistance.

Motherhood is a roller-coaster ride and you may have unexplainable mood swings, emotional ups and downs.² Here are a few things that might help you regulate your emotions:

- Postpartum depression or sadness is quite common and hence, it is important to be well-informed about it. Talk to your doctor if you observe that your moods are dipping too often.
- Avoid getting engulfed in a feeling of inadequacy or get into self-blame. Instead try to experience the complete range of emotions as it will only help in dealing with the emotionally challenging situations.
- Make sure that you are making decisions based on what you want from your life and not because you are competing with a certain colleague or you feel a pressure from the family to raise your baby in a particular way.
- Spend time with people who can uplift your mood. No matter how less this time is, it will work wonders and aid emotional recuperation.
- Apart from all this, ensure that you are staying in state of peace by practicing exercise, meditation, right diet and other such activities.

Mums, keep these tips in mind as you prepare to get back to work and you are ready to soar, both as a doting mum, as well as a successful professional.

Getting the right nutrients throughout pregnancy is essential. Wyeth's nutrient supplement, S-26 MAMA, helps pregnant mums achieve their nutrient requirements and supports appropriate weight gain.

References:

1. Healthy Children. Attending to your baby's cries. Available at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/Responding-to-Your-Babys-Cries.aspx>. Accessed on 6 September 2017.
2. Harvard Business Review. Postpartum Depression. Available at <https://hbr.org/2014/08/managing-your-emotions-after-maternity-leave>. Accessed on 6 September 2017

