

fact sheet

TIPS FOR RETURNING TO THE WORKPLACE AFTER A BABY



Return to workplace 18.12.21

At Gidget Foundation Australia, we have heard many stories from our clients about how they feel about returning to the workplace after they have had a baby. After being at home with your baby, it is another change to adjust to and another time of transition. It is normal to feel some extra stress and anxiety as you plan your return. Each parent will have their own unique array of feelings about returning to employment – some can't wait and others approach it with dread and some, a combination of each.

Here are some quotes from our clients:

"My parental leave runs out in March. I'm anxious about how I am going to work with such little sleep and then come home and look after my baby whilst being so tired".

"I'm due back at work in October and I don't have child-care options that I feel comfortable with".

"I have concerns about how my baby will react to the separation, me too actually".

There are a number of reasons that you may be feeling worried upon returning to employment.

Changing routines: While many people will be relieved to return to their professional role, there will be others who may not be so happy. Some enjoyed the time with their baby and might resent having to return to paid employment and others felt that the whole parenting thing did not suit them and almost feel excited to be back in their work role. Some experienced perinatal depression and anxiety and therefore, do not feel ready to return as their anticipated parental leave did not turn out as they had hoped.

However you feel, it is always hard in some way to return to employment as a new mum or dad and leave your baby with someone else. It involves a total reshuffle in your routine and often a team to make it all happen. It is always a good idea, to try out the routine before the time actually comes and ease you and your child into the next stage of life.

Family: Some parents have also enjoyed being involved with their children and will miss that aspect of their day. Our male clients have said that being more involved in family life gave them a unique insight into the intricacies of their children's daily lives. Fathers roles are changing and on the whole, men are more involved so they can also miss the time spent with their children when they return to employment.

For same-sex parents, there can additional challenges in being recognised in the parental role, as the non-birthing parent. GFA are hopeful that workplaces are evolving, however there is still some way to go.

Grandparents are also more involved than ever before and this can be lovely for all, albeit sometimes some difficulties can be experienced. It can be helpful to discuss ways of child rearing and daily routines before the arrangements are made. For some families though, grandparents are thousands of kilometres away and are missed greatly at this stage in life.

Connections: We are all hard wired to connect with others. It can be difficult to keep in contact with work colleagues with all the demands of parenting. Some people have missed their work colleagues and there may be anxiety about re-connecting and seeing if it feels the same upon their return to work. They might be wondering how to keep the relationship going.

Ways of employment are also changing and there is less need for time spent in an office environment, so organisations may have changed the way they operate whilst you were on parental leave. Employers can sometimes provide some flexibility with employment arrangements, so discussion with your manager whilst on leave can be useful as you plan your return. It is also recommended to keep in contact with your colleagues whilst away to keep up to date with the latest news and assist with the transition back.



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Gidget Foundation Australia exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care.

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SELF CARE TIPS:

- As you transition back to employment it is important to look after yourself and try to build in some flexibility and familiarise yourself with any family friendly policies your workplace has. Invariably your child will get sick at day care and if you have some options ready, it can ease the associated stress.
- Continue to prioritise activities that keep you centred and happy, whether they be exercise, eating well, meditation or simply connecting with loved ones.
- Try and use helpful coping strategies that you have used before and put them into practice again as you return to employment e.g. getting rest, time out, exercise.
- Try to schedule a break in between work and home e.g. get off a bus stop before your regular stop, listen to music, go for a walk. This helps being able to engage when you arrive home.
- If your child is not enjoying the encourage ways for them to express their feelings, such as play or individual special time with you doing something they enjoy. Every child has his or her own way of expressing emotions. Children will benefit if they are able to express their inner world to you. By practicing healthy way to manage your own response to change, you can help them learn to do the same.
- Try doing practice drop-offs and pick-ups before the start date. When you get home with your child, focus on them and play, even if it is for 15 minutes, then ease in to your night time routine dinner, bathes etc.
- Keep things simple, especially as you start the return back to employment.
- Get easy to re-heat meals or take away in the early days to relieve some demands.
- Cook up some easy dinners for yourself and/or your children on weekends when you have some extra time.
- When you return to work, share the load if you have a partner and call on friends or family if you need extra practical support.

When it is time to consider how you are going to re-connect with the workplace, take your time. Talk to those who can offer helpful suggestions and offer support. Give yourself permission to ease back into it. Review the plan when needed and most importantly, look after yourself! 🌸



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