Your First Week Back

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Women. Couples. Teens. Groups

A practical plan for returning after maternity leave

Start with the part of your day that will be hardest to improvise. Fill in what helps. You don't need to solve the whole week before it starts.

A few days before: Plan drop-off and pickup.

Check hours, travel time, and who's doing each handoff. If pickup might run late, confirm an authorized backup, when they'll step in, and who will notify childcare. If there's no backup, name what could move at work.

Before day one: Make the work plan explicit.

Ask what needs to be done by Friday and what can wait. Flag any schedule limits or flexibility you need. If feeding or pumping is part of your day, plan time and check what space or storage is available.

EXAMPLE / THE TUESDAY MEETING USUALLY RUNS LATE

"I need to leave at 4:45 for pickup. Can we cover my part first?" If she can't leave by 4:45, Maya texts her sister, who's already on the pickup list. Her sister confirms she's on her way and calls childcare to let them know.

Optional planning resources: **Childcare pickup policies** **Pumping at work**

Make the week workable

You might miss your baby and still feel glad to be back at work. Nothing on this page asks you to make those feelings agree.

Hand off one whole job, if help is available.

Instead of “Can you do pickup?”, try: “Can you be the childcare contact Tuesday and Thursday? That includes watching for messages and restocking the bag.” Agree on what needs a check-in and what they can handle. If you’re doing this alone, pick one thing to simplify or let wait.

Pick one person you can be honest with.

Try, “Could you text me after work Wednesday? I don’t need advice. I’d just like to tell you how it went.” If that doesn’t fit, set aside a few minutes to ask yourself what felt hardest and what helped.

Midweek: Change one thing before Monday.

What kept costing more time or energy than you expected? Name one change to try and who will take the first step. This is a review of the plan, not a grade on how you handled the week.

If worry or sadness is making daily life harder, tell your OB-GYN, midwife, or primary care clinician. In the U.S., you can also call or text the free, confidential National Maternal Mental Health Hotline anytime.

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline / 1-833-TLC-MAMA