Tip Sheet Returning from Leave – New Parents

Upon returning to work, you should not feel like you have to make up for the weeks you were out. You should not return to a mess or feel too overwhelmed. Remember, the perfect plan doesn’t exist, but here are some tips to help you with your transition back to work.

In-Touch Time

Try to set up some regular “In Touch Time” with your supervisor and the employee(s) covering for you. This can be a brief scheduled phone conversation to help you remain in the loop on what is going on at work with your projects. It helps you feel less out of sorts when you return.

Express Your Concerns

As you plan your return to work, make a list of your concerns and discuss them with your support system both at home and at the office. Which of those needs could you compromise and negotiate, even if some of them are only temporary?

Finalize Your Return Plan

If you have not already finalized your return to work plan, research the alternative work arrangement to determine if they would help you. Emory has Family Friendly Work Options for New Parents to help you.

Test Your Child Care Plan

Be sure to test your child care plan. It may feel silly to have your child in day care while you are at home, but it is a great way to test your plan for any problems and help you and your child get accustomed to it. You can try different child care services on a part-time basis to help you and your child ease into it. The WorkLife Resource Center has put together some Transitioning to Child Care ideas to help you and your child with this transition.

Make a “To Do” List

Work with your partner to devise a “To Do” list for the week. Include things that must get done regularly and things that are considered projects. Divide them up amongst the two of you or delegate some to any older children in the home able to help out. You may decide to hire a person to help clean your home or run errands for you for the initial adjustment period. These services don’t always need to cost a lot of money and often the Emory community has students looking for part-time opportunities like this.
Embrace the Guilt

Expect to feel some guilt about returning to work. It’s natural after being the sole provider for your baby since birth. Sometimes parents feel guilty about leaving their child with a caregiver other than themselves or feel guilty because they feel a sense of relief being at work.

Deal with “Super” Parent Syndrome

We have all heard about the “Super” parents of the world, but they don’t really exist. The secret to it is prioritizing and delegating. If you feel overwhelmed with it all, FSAP is available to help you at no cost and is totally confidential.

Other Helpful Tips

- Just as you did before your baby was born, prepare some simple meals and freeze them so they are ready to prepare after you return home from work. Your time is even more limited and you may be getting little sleep for a few more months.

- Try to live in the moment. It is hard, but when you are at work, focus on being at work and enjoying your time and what you are doing. When you are with your baby, enjoy the time with her. If you are fully present, you can enjoy the time more, and this is what truly matters to a child.

- Seek help from others and surround yourself with support. You may be surprised at how many people are there for you. Family is great if you have them near you, but for those of you that don’t, look to your friends and be creative to help each other in tough times. There are Dependent Care Networking resources for parents in the Emory and Atlanta areas.

- Parents should take time for themselves and as a couple. Talk about things other than just parenting and your child. It makes life more enjoyable and gives you the patience it requires to be a good parent.