

April 2, 2018

Mat Leave Back to Work Countdown

After a year on mat leave, you may be tired of being at home in sweats doing the same thing day in and day out. Alternately, you may be wishing you could stay at home with your baby as long as possible. In either case, returning to work can be stressful. It's normal to feel a range of contradictory emotions—from excitement to sadness and relief. But getting yourself organized and planning ahead can result in a more positive and easy transition back to work.

9 Months Ahead

- **Financially Smart** - Having a baby comes with lots of expenses including childcare. Opening a savings account before you return to work and contributing to it regularly can take a big load off when the time comes to make childcare payments.

6 Months Ahead

- **Considering another** – if you are thinking of having an additional child, set up a system to keep suitable baby clothes and toys by age. Additionally, you can repurpose your maternity clothes, so store and label them.
- **Connect with colleagues** – A lot can happen at work while you are away. Keeping in touch with colleagues and management throughout your leave is a good idea.

2-3 Months Ahead

- **Tearless Transition**– If you don't leave your child very often and want to minimize separation tears and anxiety, it's a good idea to start early and have a babysitter or family member take care of the baby, so they get used to being without you.
- **Seeking Childcare** - If you want to have the peace of mind and deal with one change at a time get your childcare in place early. You'll need 1-3 months to find a suitable match. Also keep in mind you may be faced with waitlists. Set up childcare a month prior to your return if you can afford it. You baby can transition, and you can process the emotions more gradually.
- **Getting the Right Childcare** - Create a spreadsheet to compare and investigate options. If you are hiring a nanny, create and list of questions to ask during the interview, check references and have a contract to outline expectations, remuneration and vacation. **EXPERT TIP** - encourage your nanny to take vacation when you do.
- **Start the Conversation** – This might seem like a scary but do it anyway. Talk with your employer about a gradual transition. So, instead of Monday 9-5, ask to start midweek or do 3 days a week or half days to get your work brain back. You could suggest working from home using technology to stay connected. If you are given this flexibility, respect it.

1-Month Ahead

- **Prep Ahead** – You will have a lot less time when you go back to work, so go crazy preparing and freezing as many meals as possible. You'll appreciate being able to walk in the door, pop something in the oven and have hang out time with your family
- **Planning to breastfeed** - If you are planning to continue feeding your child breast milk once you're back at work consider purchasing a good quality double breast pump. **EXPERT TIP** - If you buy 2 you can pump both breasts and save time. Block time in your calendar to pump. Have someone else feed your baby so they can adapt.
- **Create a schedule** - Provide your child's caregiver with a schedule of the baby's feeding and napping times.
- **Ready with back up** - Be sure to have a backup plan if your childcare provider is ill or on vacation.

1-Week Ahead

- **Coffee with colleagues** - Meeting with one or two colleagues before the big day will help ensure you are not overwhelmed by changes.
- **Get set for the week** – Choose your outfits for the week and buy a couple of new outfits so you really feel on your game.
- **Time saver** – Set up an account for online grocery delivery.

3 Days Ahead

- **Positive planning** – If you're worried about getting emotional, use meditation to help you though. In your meditation practice, imagine being at work and bring forward a positive calm state of mind. **EXPERT TIP** - Try the app, "Calm", it works miracles!
- **Stay connected** – Block time with your spouse weekly to review the to do lists and share your calendars. Set a regular time to text or call you childcare provider.

1st Day Back at work

- **Capturing special moments** – Just because you are at work doesn't mean you have to miss out, encourage your childcare provider to take snapshots or video to share milestones and priceless moments with you when you are away from your child. Place a picture of your child on your desk or rotate pictures in your screensaver.
- **Pat Yourself on the Back** - Once you settle into work, you'll notice how much more productive you are than colleagues without children. While you likely can't stay late, you've learned how to seriously get stuff done! You'll skip going for coffee, idle chitchat and constantly checking your phone. All that time at home, you learned when you have 2 minutes it can't be wasted. So your time management and multitasking skills that will payoff in a stronger work ethic.

If you're looking for an expert who can offer effective organizing solutions before returning to work following a mat leave, look no further than Professional Organizers in Canada (POC).

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About POC

Professional Organizers in Canada (POC) is a national registered non-profit association that provides education, business development tools and a code of ethics for all types of organizers across Canada. Currently representing over 600 Professional Organizers in more than 14 chapters nation-wide, POC's mandate is to provide a supportive environment for members to learn, share ideas, network, and exchange resources. POC also works to educate the public about the organizing industry and the benefits of working with a POC member.