



## MY 'RETURN-TO-WORK' CHECKLIST

Returning to work after maternity leave or a longer career break is a big transition and the research shows that - for many women - their return to work happens sooner than they are ready and is harder than they expect.

But there are concrete things you can do to help you prepare and adjust to your new normal, and I've put them together in this handy checklist.

If you need some support or have any questions as you go through the checklist, please do [get in touch](#) and I will be happy to help.

Melanie

P.S. If you are in Berlin, why not join [WHM Returners](#)? The group is for mums who are on maternity leave and will be returning to work for the company they're currently employed by. We meet once a month to share return-to-work tips, advice and support. [Here](#) is the questionnaire to fill in if you would like to get on the invite list.

### Preparing to return to work

I have...

- Reminded myself of the reasons why I am returning to work and the benefits for me and my family.
- Increased my energy and enthusiasm for my return by spending time with the people who are encouraging me to make this change, rather than those who are questioning or critical of my decision.
- Contacted other mums I know that have returned to work, and asked how they returned to work and what helpful tips they could pass onto me.
- Worked out the financial impact of returning to work, and prepared a weekly budget of the likely costs (childcare, transport etc) versus likely or known income.
- Brought my workplace skills and knowledge back up-to-date by re-subscribing to professional journals, reading related press, taking update/refresher courses, going to seminars and conferences, and meeting up with ex-colleagues.
- Boosted my confidence by listing my previous work accomplishments, and my skills and strengths to remind myself of the value I have to offer in the workplace.
- Written a list of my 'non-negotiables' at work and at home. For example at work, are you prepared to work beyond the standard hours, either at home or in the office? If you are prepared to work beyond the standard hours, then how often and for how long for? How prepared are you to keep in touch (by email or phone) or attend meetings outside your agreed work time?

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At home, maybe you decide that eating evening meals together as a family is important to you and something you aren't prepared to compromise on. Or maybe you'd like to keep the weekends family focused, and work free?

- Written a list of the things I am going to let go of at home once I have started back at work, including the things I will stop doing or what I will delegate. Housework is a good example, and baking homemade cakes for the school fair is another!
- Put a strong support system in place - a caregiver (plus back-up emergency care), cleaner etc, and if I'm struggling at work and/ or home, I know who I can ask for help - a family member, friend, coach.
- Prepared my family for my return to work, including talking to my partner to agree on how we are going to share our home responsibilities.
- Dealt with any looming feelings of 'mum guilt' as much as I possibly can.
- A feeling of being 'put together' and confident about my appearance.
- Spoken to my manager and HR about my work arrangements (e.g. phased return, flexible start and finish times for the first few weeks) and know what my first week back at work will look like.
- Done a 'practice run' of my morning drop off and travel to work and considered what my routine might need to look like in order to get to work on time and ready, and what support I have available to help.

### During the first three months back at work

I have...

- Managed my colleagues' expectations of my capacity during the first weeks and months back at work - and even more importantly, managed my own.
- Set clear/ tangible/ measurable goals to work towards in my new role, and ensured my manager is aligned with them. I have built in opportunities for quick results that will enhance my reputation as someone who delivers.
- Ensured I am spending the time I have both at work and at home on the 'right' things, and I am using my time effectively.
- Identified the colleagues with whom it is essential to build rapport, and with the limited time I have for networking, I am concentrating my time and energy on these relationships. And I have organised my home-life so that I make it to a few social events, as I know this is a great opportunity to get to know my colleagues on a more personal level.
- A clear idea of how I wish to be known in the workplace, and have figured out how I can demonstrate my 'personal brand' as I work towards achieving the goals I have set and building new relationships.
- Put aside 15 minutes a week to write down what I have achieved at work. It is not only a good way of building a case for a raise or promotion, but also in giving me confidence and pride in my work.

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*Work Happy Mums is the go-to resource for return-to-work professional women and career advancers. We help women get clarity on what they really want from their career after having children, enhance their skills, rebuild their professional confidence, and successfully navigate career and family to be the best they can be at work and at home.*

*Visit [Work Happy Mums](#) to find out more about us, and get in touch today to schedule your complimentary Career Assessment to see how we can support you on your back-to-work journey and beyond. We're with you every step of the way!*

*Best wishes,  
Melanie Fieseler*

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