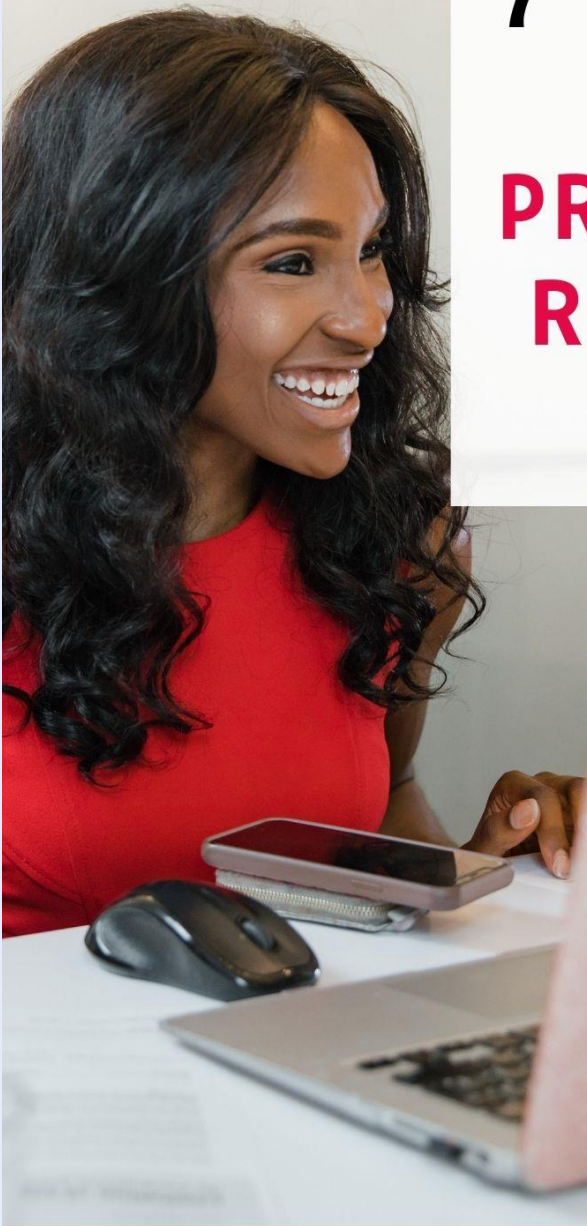




7 MUST DOS FOR A PRODUCTIVE RETURN TO WORK!



**A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR WORKING MUMS RETURNING
FROM MATERNITY LEAVE, BACK TO WORK**

Work productivity & leadership tips; crucial conversations with employer; and tips to keep baby and home under good care

HAPPY MUM BOOK SERIES (BOOK 1) LIMITED EDITION

PREPARING WELL FOR YOUR RETURN FROM MATERNITY LEAVE, BACK TO WORK CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A WORKING MUM!

Lovely mum! It's been around 3 months that you've been at home, getting used to a new routine and a big change! The arrival of your little baby. Things are no longer the way they used to be for you and will never go back to the same! You are still tired and sleep-deprived, but something scarier is ticking around the corner... returning to work after a few months of maternity leave.

You probably have a gazillion questions on how to make this whole thing work with your expected return to work?

❖ How to be productive at work when you hardly sleep

through the night, are tired during the day, and your body's clock has gotten used to a more chilled routine;

- ❖ How to breastfeed baby during the day (or deal with engorged boobs because you can't make your way home to breastfeed baby at lunch time)
- ❖ How to keep concentrated at work with no idea what is happening home with baby?
- ❖ And so much more?

Know that you are not alone. Millions of working mums are going through this right now, and we all wish we had someone or a free resource out there to show us the way

Today, we hope you'll discover new horizons to cope with a safe and stress-free return from maternity leave. So, what should you do?

WELCOME AND LET'S GET STARTED!!!

MUST DO #1: Talk to your husband, a close family member, someone you trust about how you feel and enlist their support.



Motherhood is not a mom's journey alone, nor is it a lonely one

Do not hold these feelings for just yourself, at the expense of your mental health! The metabolic, physical, and mental experience that a mum's body goes through giving birth is huge! This means your body will be in dire need of rest to regenerate. Unfortunately, as a new mum, you also have to deal with the frequent feeding needs of your baby every 2-3-4 hours. And there is also a lot of cleaning of baby's stuff to do every day.

Multiplying a deprived body that needs regeneration and return to a fast-paced work environment can lead to chaos. And here is more detail why:

- ❖ **Depression and mental health issues among working mums are on the rise.** Sadly, it's hardly talked about. Working mums go through this challenge alone with no trusted counseling or support community to talk about their personal struggles.

❖ **Companies and working mums alike realize this when it's already too late!** The saddening result may be a combination of decreased productivity (which can affect companies' results), stalled career growth for yourself as a working mum, or at the extreme, dropping out from the work environment. But with the right amount of preparation, you don't need to get there!

This is why you should not take this journey alone! Beyond how you feel, enlist the support of the people who you can rely on both at home (husband/partner, family members, a nanny) and at work (direct manager and co-workers) to support you in caring for your baby while being a productive and a successful professional.

❖ **Happy Mum Resource to consult and action! *Guide on how to engage your support network!***

❖ **Points to ponder:**

- *How much should your partner/husband be involved in baby care?*
- *Is your peace of mind and happiness worth the money it may cost to hire a very good support staff or invest in the tools you need to be happy as a mum?*

MUST DO #2: Get baby used to coping in your absence



Early introduction of baby to some degree of autonomy is healthy for both you and him

Introduce your baby to the bottle at least 1 month prior to your return to work. Even if your baby is on exclusive breastfeeding, pumping milk and having someone else feed him with the bottle will help you prepare your baby to some independence and not rely on your presence to be fed. It is important that someone other than you does the bottle feeding, otherwise, your baby's brain associates you to his feeding.

Do this effectively for a week, and you'll soon be able to get out of the house with peace of mind and not feel glued to baby. **While on maternity leave, you should have a life too, for your own care, which does not necessarily include the baby, even if you love him so much!** 😊

NOTE: Feeding baby on the bottle requires extreme cleanliness to protect your baby from avoidable infections.

❖ Happy Mum Resource to consult and action! *Guide for expressing, storing, and serving breastmilk*

❖ Points to ponder:

- *Do you have productive tools to pump and store breastmilk effectively? Is your efficiency worth the cost of buying the best equipment possible?*
- *How clean and trained is your nanny to effectively thaw and serve your baby, stored breastmilk in a healthy way?*

MUST DO #3: Get a good night's sleep and limit night duties with baby.



You need SUFFICIENT SLEEP, so you don't look like a Zombie at work!

Teach your baby to get long stretches of sleep

Go to bed almost immediately after your baby has gone to sleep, ideally, not in the same room with you, to

teach your baby to sleep autonomously. Get daddy, nanny, or a family member to do night duty so you get some well-deserved uninterrupted sleep until morning

- ❖ **Happy Mum Resource to consult and action! *7 steps to get baby sleeping tight, every night***
- ❖ **Points to ponder: *Do you know lack of sleep, not only will result in productivity loss, but can also lead to immune depression, hallucination, and worrisome health challenges in the long run?***

MUST DO #4: Talk to your manager and your employer



You need support from your workplace, and complicity with your manager, big time!

Few weeks before resuming work, discuss with your employer, possible options to

make your return to work as manageable and productive as possible for everyone.

About making the office a welcome place for working mums

❖ **Ensuring you get nursing time.** Labor law in many countries makes a 1hour provision per day for working mums, known as nursing time until your baby is 1 or 2 years old. It is your right to work 1 hour less than usual because of all the baby care work at home

❖ **Pumping milk at work** - this requires having a closed room where you can have privacy to pump at lunch time (if you don't have a

personal office space). You will have a hard time focusing on work when your boobs are engorged with breastmilk.

❖ **Negotiating work from home some days in the week.** (even better if you started this before going on maternity leave. Otherwise, wait until you resume before you try/propose this).

You'll Start progressively with 1 day and prove to your manager that you produce

good results still when you work from home, then progressively make it 2-3 days per week, and so forth.

About professional development and productivity

Your more important conversation with your manager when you resume should be about being back at work after 3 months or more of absence. Seek to:

(1) Understand their priorities for the year and how s/he expects that you can help her/him achieve those objectives; then most important

(2) share your own development objectives and the type of support you'll need from her/him to succeed in your return from maternity leave. As for pre-partum, check for flexible options to allow you to work remotely from home or at hours when you are most productive. The ultimate goal

is that you give yourself all chances to deliver well. But to deliver well requires that you create the comfort zone you need for work so you can be on top of all the other things going on in your life.

(3) Manage expectations to take on work progressively.

If you were managing multiple projects before going off, ask to take projects back progressively (because a lot has happened in 3 months or more, and only fast and furious would be able to take on all at once). If you have a strong team to whom you had delegated work, then let them continue to manage some things, and hand them back over to you progressively.

❖ **Happy Mum Resource to consult and action!**

Guide for working effectively from home

❖ **Points to ponder:**

- *Has anyone in your workplace had babies and negotiated such facilities at work? If yes, what were the results, if no, why?*
- *Do you believe in the maxim “No venture, nothing have”? So, go do it! “All you have to do is ASK and BELIEVE wholeheartedly in your ask, and the Universe will respond YES”!*

MUST DO #5: Become more productive at work.



You have more responsibilities now as a mother. Be wiser, learn to do what you used to, in less time!

“It is normal that your first days, weeks, if not months back at work feel overwhelming with several emails to catch up on after a long time off, but you are a star (hope you know it) and will get back on top of things soon. It takes 6-12 weeks on average to get back to being comfortable with the normal speed of work. So do not expect those average 50-60 hour work weeks yet. Just give yourself time and don’t beat yourself up.”

- (1) **Limit the number of commitments you make.** It's tempting to put your hand up or volunteer for a new activity from senior leadership, but this will not help you achieve the career growth you hope for if you end up messing up and not meeting your commitments. Actually, no commitments, period! Your team will understand
- (2) **Delegate, delegate, and delegate!** Your team was on top of everything for several months while you were away. Do you think they will keep being on top of things? Of course! They will appreciate the trust you put in them and the growth opportunity that comes with delegation too!
- (3) **Start your days with a clear to-do list – actually, end**

your days with the to-do list of the next day. Starting your days staring first at your email without a clear sense of what is most important for you to achieve in that day is like aimless wandering. And in the end, only you and your baby will suffer from the fact that you did not optimize your time at work. So, How should you go about it?

Rule #1: Use whatever tool allows you to list all your activities for the day. No need to get complicated tools. If it is just a list on a notepad; Microsoft tracking tools, or One Note, just have a list made somewhere at the end of each day, for the next day

Rule #2: Review and re-prioritize the list in the morning, asking yourself *“If there is 1 most important thing I must achieve today and feel happy and productive about my day,*

what would it be?” This will help you shorten your to-do to what is critical and have the rest as icing on the cake if you get to them. Isn't it nice when you are done with your most important thing before noon, that you will naturally close from work early and happily rn home to see your baby?

Rule #3: Think of domino effects: what is the thing that if you do it, it can have a domino effect on all your other tasks? The most simple example I like to use a LOT is delegation! 😊 By delegating early enough to your team members, you give yourself that chance of a domino effect. Then your most important priority for that day is that you write down or provide VERY CLEAR instructions to each team member (ideally with an example of what an excellent result looks like by taking the first stab yourself

or together with them) so they can produce the best result.

(4) **Track your time at work and limit distractions.** There is a conspiracy going on for all professionals, to distract us from what is most important in our day-to-day jobs. These include emails, chats (Skype, Teams, Slack, Whatsapp and the list goes on), endless zoom calls, etc. Do your own time audit, prioritize what is absolutely most important in your day and get it done before 11 am. Set 2-3 chunks of times in the day (e.g., 11am; and 4pm when your brain concentration stops decreasing) for when you look at emails (I hope you don't have those notifications pop up when a new email or message comes in; or that you don't start your day looking at emails and being in reactive mode all day long! – unless your

role is customer care!). You will be amazed at how much more productive you will become.

(5) **Find your way out of calls where your presence is not ABSOLUTELY necessary!** Zoom calls have become the thing that kills the few hours you have in your day. The rule of thumb to get out of zoom calls?":

Rule #1 When you receive an invite for calls or meetings, **don't accept immediately.** Take your break time when you are reviewing email to review each invitation and ask yourself: *"Are other people as knowledgeable as me attending the call and the call would go fine anyway?"*; even harsher: *"will someone die if I don't attend this call?"* (in the literal sense, is someone's life or death dependent on your participation?).

If you've got your answer, then decline and say you have other commitments at that time but will be happy to see proceeds from the meeting.

Rule #2: If declining sounds too rude to you right now, start by replying "Tentative" – and make it clear in your response that you have other commitments but will see if you can attend, but no promise.

Rule #3: Another smart way to do this, especially if the invitation comes from your reports is to ask them "Do you absolutely need me for this call?". If the answer is no, then decline and ask them to share proceeds from the meeting.

(6) **Again, unless you work for customer care, silence social media, and work chats, and**

check them only in set chunks of hours. This requires you to set your status as "away" or give a heads up to your team that you are not checking messages instantly. If there was an emergency, people will call you directly on phone.

(7) Protect your calendar so you can truly work in your focus time. Having your calendar empty is often an excuse for people to keep sending you invites. Once you've defined your priority for the day, please, set chunks of time in your calendar to allow you to focus and just do that. Microsoft Outlook (if that is what you use) has an in-built option to set up focus time across all days in your calendar, by default. Protecting your calendar will save your life as a professional, not just as a mum!

MUST DO #6: Take a good nap each day, after lunch



A good nap is a massive refresher to be super-productive in your afternoon!

You cannot suddenly let go of everything your body got used to while you were on leave. A good 30-mins nap helps you re-center and refocus your day and make your afternoons super productive. Find a way to do this in your office or the nursing room if your office has one. You can protect your nap time by adding it to your calendar.

MUST DO #7: Hire a VERY GOOD nanny (or train your current nanny to be excellent!)



The quality of nanny you recruit to look after your baby can make or break your career!

For all of the above to work excellently, you need to feel reassured that someone is in charge at home and that your baby is well taken care of. This is the only way you can concentrate and be productive at work. If there is one thing you should start acting on right now, it is making sure you hire a very good nanny.

❖ Happy Mum Resource to consult and action!

Consult "3 steps to hire and train the perfect nanny!"

❖ Points to ponder:

- *Is your peace of mind and happiness worth the money it may cost to hire a very good nanny?*
- *By having a capable and very good nanny who you can delegate chores that do not require you, would you not be able to free up more time to spend good quality time with your baby and family or simply rest?*
- *As you free up more time, what do you think can happen to your personal and career development, or opportunities to move into higher-paid roles?*

IN CLOSING

- ❖ Key messages to go away with:
- ❖ DO NOT GO THROUGH THIS JOURNEY ALONE! Enlist help both at home and at work
- ❖ Create complicity with your manager to be your champion at work to help you protect your time
- ❖ Learn to delegate so your life will be better!
- ❖ Become an essentialist at work! Focus on what is most important! Not everything must be perfect. Prioritize the few ones that need to be done great so you keep providing value to your company
- ❖ Hire an expert nanny or train your nanny to become excellent!
- ❖ Do not be stingy on money! Use money, as much as you and your partner can afford to get yourself the best tools and support that will enhance your peace of mind (High quality nanny; breast pump and milk storage equipment, etc.)
- ❖ Prioritize your life! If you don't, someone else will!

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