

@Worn Out Working Mum: The 12 Week Plan

So, you have re-entered the workforce after raising your tiny, adorable but essentially useless human being, and you now have to reignite your brain cells and actually go back to work, probably to simply cover off the extraordinary cost of childcare alone? I've got you.

This is the general framework I used when returning to work. I've always felt it was important to have my own personal and professional goals as I moved forward, not to give myself more work, but to ensure that I had something to take to management/the team. I feel this is especially useful when you may not have the support you would have wished for yourself on return.

Please feel free to make a copy of this 12-week plan and good luck!

12 week return to work plan

Week 1 - 4 | Getting back to it

Week 1: Catching up:

Spend time familiarising yourself with any new policies, procedures, or team dynamics. Join in any orientation should you be so lucky to have one.

Add in 1:1 time with your manager/boss or primary stakeholder but do not overload this week with meetings.

Week 2: Networking

Schedule coffee meetings or virtual catch-ups with colleagues to rebuild connections and understand current projects.

Time to start reintroducing yourself to colleagues - try to keep these light to begin with, rebuild connections and squeeze in your required coffee.

Week 3: Skill regrowth:

Identify where your areas of weakness are, where you are rusty from your time away and allocate adequate time to refresh through courses/project time or training sessions with required individuals.

Week 4: Goals:

Meet with your manager or supervisor to discuss objectives for the upcoming quarter or month and how you can align with business objectives and goals

Think about personal growth goals long term vs short term (remember do not over do it.)

Personal reminders:

TRY and dedicate time (even 10 minutes in your calendar) for yourself - eat, scroll or have a coffee.

Journaling: Spend a few minutes reflecting on your day, noting down any challenges, accomplishments, or moments of gratitude - keep a folder within your inbox to label any achievements you want to highlight later down the line.

Family Time: Prioritise time with the family - add family time into your calendar e.g. collections, bedtimes and any upcoming medical appointments.

Week 5-8: Balancing it out

Week 5: Immersion

Dive deep into your current projects: Take the time to immerse yourself fully in the projects you're working on.

Seek to understand objectives: Clarify the goals and objectives of each project

Review project timelines and deadlines to ensure that you're aware of any upcoming milestones or deliverables.

Familiarise yourself with deliverables: Take a close look at the deliverables expected for each project. Understand what needs to be delivered.

Week 6: Time Management

Take proactive steps to manage your time effectively and efficiently. This may involve using calendars, to-do lists, or time-tracking apps to organise your tasks and prioritise your workload.

Break down your tasks into manageable chunks and set realistic goals and deadlines for yourself.

Identify potential sources of stress in your day and take steps to minimise them (hahaha ah, yeah.)

Identify your most productive times of day and schedule your most important tasks accordingly.

Week 7: Collaboration

Participate actively in team meetings, and other collaborative activities.

Take the time to get to know your colleagues on a personal level.

Week 8: Feedback Loop

Request feedback from your peers and supervisors on your performance.
Act on feedback: Use the feedback you receive to make positive changes and improvements in your work.
Provide feedback to colleagues.

Personal reminders:

Set boundaries between work and family life to try and prevent burnout!
Do not say sorry for something that is not within your control, use language such as “thank you for bearing with me” “I appreciate you working with me on this.”

Week 9-12: Reflect

Week 9: Assess your current calendar and work: Schedule a meeting with your manager to discuss your expectations, ensuring alignment with team goals. Include a discussion on your personal development goals and how they align with the team's objectives.

Week 10: Mentorship: Identify someone within the organisation/industry who can provide guidance and support to navigate career and being a working parent, even if it is informally.

Week 11: Personal check-in

Reflect on your personal development goals set earlier. Are you making progress towards them? Are there any adjustments or additional support you need (from work) to achieve them?
Consider scheduling a meeting with your manager or a trusted colleague to discuss your progress and any challenges you may be facing.

Week 12: Take time to celebrate the fact you have survived the past 12 weeks of parenting and working even if you've spent the majority of it covered in snot and trying to work with a baby flopped over your lap.

Personal reminders:

Delegate where you need e.g. support from family members, online food shop, one time cleaning service.
Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed and remember if it is okay to ask for help.
Celebrate the small wins where you can and let go of perfectionism.