

Going on Parental Leave

Whether you're a mother or a father, new or experienced: a baby has a big impact on your life. Seeking advice opens you to new ideas and ways to enhance the routines that you already have. This tip sheet can be used as a checklist for before and during parental leave, to help you manage the psychological and practical transition — including routine, self-care, finances and return to work.

Remember to prepare: do your research, what does your work offer in terms of leave? What government entitlements are available to you? Look online and speak with HR. Being prepared helps you to feel more confident and, most importantly, help you to match your expectations of transition with the reality of what you experience.

PRE-PARENTAL LEAVE:

ORGANISE YOUR WORKLOAD — the earlier the better, try to tie-up as many loose ends as possible. Set goals for yourself and reflect on the gains that you made, so you can leave work on a positive note.

BUDGET — best to budget before you go on parental leave, even better, make the time to get advice from your bank or financial adviser.

MAINTAIN INTIMACY with your partner. Research has shown that a gentle touch on each other's neck, shoulders, and hands, increases oxytocin, a hormone that facilitates bonding, and reduces blood pressure and stress levels.

OFFER LOVE AND SUPPORT — this is something that you and your partner can do; encourage and praise each other and know that any anxieties you share are common for new parents. Remember to share the load of chores.

ACCESS SUPPORT:

Most organisations has an employee assistance program where you can get free confidential counselling to talk through your feelings, your preparations and the practicalities of not being at work.

ACCEPT OFFERS OF HELP — you'll need it. Ask people as well, most are happy to spend time with a baby and it will give

you a break. Giving yourself permission to look after yourself is critical in coping with the transition to parenthood. Have a regular guilt-free night off/date night or a couple of hours during a weekend to sit in a café and read the paper.

JOIN ONLINE FORUMS — they're a great source of comfort and consolidation when you're tired, rundown and/or feeling isolated.

LOVE YOURSELF by eating well but not being hard on yourself when you can't, being as active as you can, and make the most of this special bonding period.

JOIN A LOCAL MOTHERS' GROUP or find a local playgroup so you can build a more localised network of support from other's in the same position as you.

For further information:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/>

<https://www.moneysmart.gov.au/life-events-and-you/life-events/having-a-baby>

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