

Your Return-to-Work Checklist

Printable Bonus — Included with The Return-to-Work Survival Blueprint

From *The Return-to-Work Survival Blueprint* | Thrive with Peace

4-6 WEEKS BEFORE

- Do the Emotional Inventory — name what you feel
- Fill in the Division of Labour Audit with your partner
- Schedule a planning meeting with your manager
- Confirm childcare & start settling-in sessions
- Build a capsule work wardrobe (8-10 pieces that fit now)
- Set up pumping bag & identify your pump space at work
- Do a full trial run of your morning routine + commute
- Write yourself a Permission Slip (what do you give yourself permission for?)

THE NIGHT BEFORE DAY ONE

- Pack nappy bag, pump bag, and work bag
- Lay out clothes for you and baby
- Prepare grab-and-go breakfast
- Set two alarms (allow 15 extra minutes)
- Charge your phone
- Go to bed early. Everything else can wait.

WEEK ONE SURVIVAL RULES

- Your only goal is to get through it. Lower the bar, then lower it again.
- You will probably cry. That does not mean you made the wrong choice.
- Eat lunch. Drink water. Step outside once.
- Do not check email after working hours.
- On Friday, write down 3 things you handled well.
- Do one thing just for you this weekend, even if it's 10 minutes of silence.

WEEKLY RESET (SUNDAY, 10 MIN)

- What worked last week? What needs adjusting?
- Plan 5 weekend dinners
- Check childcare schedule for the week
- Prep one batch-cook component
- Lay out Monday's clothes
- Check in with your partner: how are we doing?
- Schedule one thing just for you

CONVERSATIONS TO HAVE

With your manager:

- Share your top 3 priorities for the first month
- Request any flexibility (phased return, adjusted hours)
- Set pumping schedule in your calendar
- Align on 30/60/90-day expectations

With your partner:

- Compare Division of Labour Audits
- Agree who does drop-off, pick-up, night wakings
- Name your non-negotiables (e.g., bedtime, 30 min decompression)
- Schedule a weekly 10-minute check-in

With your childcare provider:

- Share feeding schedule, sleep cues, allergies
- Agree on communication style (photos? updates? emergencies only?)
- Complete at least 2 settling-in sessions before Day 1

DECISION FATIGUE ELIMINATORS

- Same breakfast every workday
- Lay out all clothes the night before (you + baby)
- Keep a permanently packed nappy bag, replenish nightly
- Batch-plan all weekend meals on Sunday
- Two fixed windows per day for non-urgent messages
- Automate every recurring decision you can

THE 90-DAY CHECK-IN

- **Work:** Am I engaged, growing, and valued?
- **Baby:** Is my child settled? Am I present when we're together?
- **Relationship:** Are we operating as a team?
- **Body:** Am I eating, sleeping, and moving enough?
- **Mind:** Am I managing my mental health?
- **Identity:** Am I becoming who I want to be this season?

WHEN TO GET HELP

- Crying most days with no improvement week to week
- Constant Sunday-evening dread beyond normal reluctance
- Intrusive thoughts or anxiety interfering with daily life
- Feeling disconnected from your baby in a way that frightens you
- Physical symptoms you're ignoring because you "don't have time"

If any of these resonate, talk to your GP, a therapist, or someone you trust. Struggling beyond normal adjustment is not weakness — it's information.

You are not just going back to work. You are building a new life that holds all of who you are.