

returning to work

going back to work after losing a baby can feel surreal, stepping into a world that kept turning while yours stopped. colleagues may not know, or may not know what to say. there is no perfect time and no perfect way to do this. this page is only here to make a hard return a little gentler, and to remind you that you are allowed to need it to be slow.

you do not have to be 'back to normal' to be back at work. you only have to get through the day you are in.

BEFORE YOU GO BACK

take the leave you are entitled to. you may have more right to time off than you realise, ask your employer or HR about bereavement and sick leave. do not rush back to prove anything to anyone.

decide what you want others to know. you owe no one the details. it can help to ask one trusted colleague or manager to quietly let others know, so you are not explaining it over and over.

plan a soft re-entry if you can. a phased return, shorter days at first, or starting mid-week can take the edge off. ask for what would help; a good workplace will want to support you.

FOR THE DAYS THEMSELVES

have an exit line ready. a simple “i need a few minutes” lets you step away when a wave comes. you are allowed to cry in the bathroom and come back. that is not weakness; that is courage.

expect ambushes. a pregnant colleague, a baby-shower email, an innocent question can wind you. it is not a setback, it is grief doing what grief does. be ready to be kind to yourself when it happens.

lower the bar, kindly. you may be slower, foggier, more tired than before. that is grief, not failure. do what you can, and let the rest wait.

let every feeling have room. focus and fog, ordinary moments and sudden sorrow can share the same shift. getting through the day is itself an act of strength.

IF THE DAYS FEEL UNBEARABLE

if you are struggling to carry on, please reach out. you should not have to hold this alone.

SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group): 0800 567 567

Lifeline South Africa: 0861 322 322

there is no right pace. there is only yours.