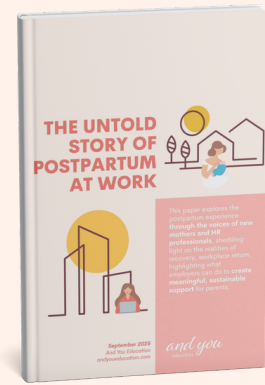


PLAYING YOUR PART

From our 2025 Research

Women want to return to work with confidence, health, and support—but the **structures around them too often fall short**. HR leaders, too, recognize both the gaps and the opportunity to do better. Here's a practical checklist to make changes in your workplace, today.



Before Leave



- Provide clear, written guidelines on maternity and parental leave policies.
- Hold a pre-leave planning conversation to discuss workload handover, coverage, return timelines, and working preferences.
- Offer employees the choice to outline how (and if) they'd like to stay connected during leave.
- Train managers on what to say (and what not to say) before leave — with a focus on being empathetic listeners

During Leave



- Maintain optional (employee-led) touchpoints—updates about team news, invitations to social events, or check-ins.
- Ensure benefits, healthcare access, and HR resources are clear and accessible.
- Respect boundaries: never pressure employees to return early or engage beyond what they've requested.

Return-to-Work Transition



- Offer phased return options (e.g. reduced hours, part-time, or remote work) for a 4–6 week adaptation period.
- Hold structured return-to-work meetings — once upon return and again a few weeks later — to revisit workload, expectations, and support needs.
- Ensure practical accommodations such as private lactation spaces, flexible pumping schedules, and childcare-friendly meeting times.
- Provide access to coaching or peer mentoring to help parents navigate the transition with confidence.

Ongoing Support



- Schedule regular manager check-ins that prioritize wellbeing and recognize the skills, strengths, and perspectives employees bring after becoming parents — rather than focusing solely on performance metrics.
- Normalize open conversations about parenthood and mental health so they're part of everyday team culture, not hidden topics.
- Gather 1:1 feedback from employees returning from leave to understand their experience and use it to review and refine policies annually.
- Track outcomes over time — retention, promotion, and engagement of new parents — alongside direct feedback, to measure impact and ensure policies evolve with employee needs.

Beyond the Transition



- Pair returning parents with a “buddy” who has been through the transition.
- Create a resource hub with trusted materials on postpartum recovery, childcare, and workplace rights.
- Encourage leaders to model family-friendly behaviors (leaving on time, not emailing in the evening, respecting boundaries).

Want the research behind the recommendations?

Read *The Untold Story of Postpartum at Work*