



EMPLOYERS



Taking a Leave of Absence Without Derailing Your Career

For most of your working life, you'll probably juggle your responsibilities at home and the office, but sometimes personal issues demand your full attention. Caregiving can be one of those things that creates enough of a disruption that a leave of absence may be appropriate.

A leave of absence can be the ideal solution for such major life events. However, it's important to take precautions so you'll be able to resume your career when things settle down.

After all, life is full of uncertainties. One day you're paying for monthly parking, and the next you could be considering taking an extended break from your job. Use these ideas for taking time off without sacrificing future opportunities.

Planning Your Leave of Absence

- Save money. Unless you're on disability, you probably won't receive any pay while you're away from work. Build up your cash reserves in advance. Reduce your housing expenses if possible. Cook at home instead of dining out. Cut membership fees.



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- Research your rights. You may be legally entitled to some forms of leave, depending on the country you reside in. Check your employee manual or speak with your HR department.
- Weigh the consequences. Clarify what level of job protection you're provided. With mandated leave, there's usually a guarantee you'll be reinstated. With voluntary leave, you could be terminated if there's no suitable opening available when you return.
- Cover your responsibilities. Assure your boss that you care about your job. Present proposals for how to cover your tasks while you're out.
- Give prompt notice. Let your employer know about your plans as soon as possible. Cooperating on a smooth transition will help everyone to adapt to the changes.
- Ask for Part Time or Flex Time work. Cross train a colleague to help with your work if you need to be absent.



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Taking Your Leave of Absence

- Provide updates. Keep your boss in the loop. Tell them about any developments in your caregiving role or other circumstances that would affect your return to work.
- Remain accessible. Of course, your situation will impact your co-workers as well as your boss. If you're able to stay in touch, give a trusted team member your contact information so you can answer questions as they come up.
- Stay active. Look for ways to minimize gaps on your resume. If your situation allows, do volunteer work, or take on consulting assignments. Join a committee at your professional association.
- Protect your health. For some workers, staying home can be more stressful than keeping up their usual 9 to 5 routine. Pay extra attention to eating a balanced diet, exercising daily, and sleeping well. Spend time with family and friends. Find a support network to talk about your caregiving role.



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Returning From Your Leave of Absence

- Contact your employer. Thank your employer for accommodating you and let them know that you're eager to be back on the job. Discuss what would be the most productive way for you to catch up.
- Modify your job. In some cases, you may need to make a phased return to work. Ask your employer about altering your hours or responsibilities or adapting your workspace.
- Negotiate offers. What about job hunting after a leave of absence if you decide to move on or your employer needs to terminate you because there's no immediate openings? Find out what salary range is appropriate for your skills, and rehearse a brief explanation of the situation that you can deliver with confidence when you go on interviews.

Preparing for emergencies gives you peace of mind and more control over your future. Collaborate with your employer so you can maintain your professionalism while taking off the time you need for personal obligations.



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“Doctors diagnose, nurses heal, and caregivers make sense of it all.”

Brett H. Lewis | Author
