

# *Parents in the Workplace*

June 14, 2021

Lori Mihalich-Levin, JD

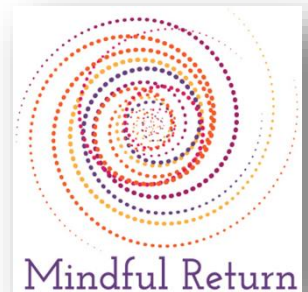
Jeremy Smith



@mindfulreturn

# Here's What We're Hearing Right Now...

## Sound Familiar?



@mindfulreturn

# Anxiety re: RTO is High (and Avoidance Only Increases It)

Forbes

Mar 16, 2021, 08:00am EDT | 11,052 views

## Return To Work Anxiety? You're Not Alone.



Chris Cancialosi Contributor

Entrepreneurs

I cover leadership and entrepreneurship through the lens of culture.

Human Resource  
**Executive**

HRUS

HR TECHNOLOGY

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

TALENT MANAGEMENT

## Employee anxiety about returning to the office is sky-high. Now what?

**Anxious about returning to work? Psychologists offer insight and tips** from Limeade raises concerns for HR leaders bringing workers back.

By Iqbal Pittalwala and Holly Ober, UC Riverside

Wednesday, May 5, 2021



Mindful Return

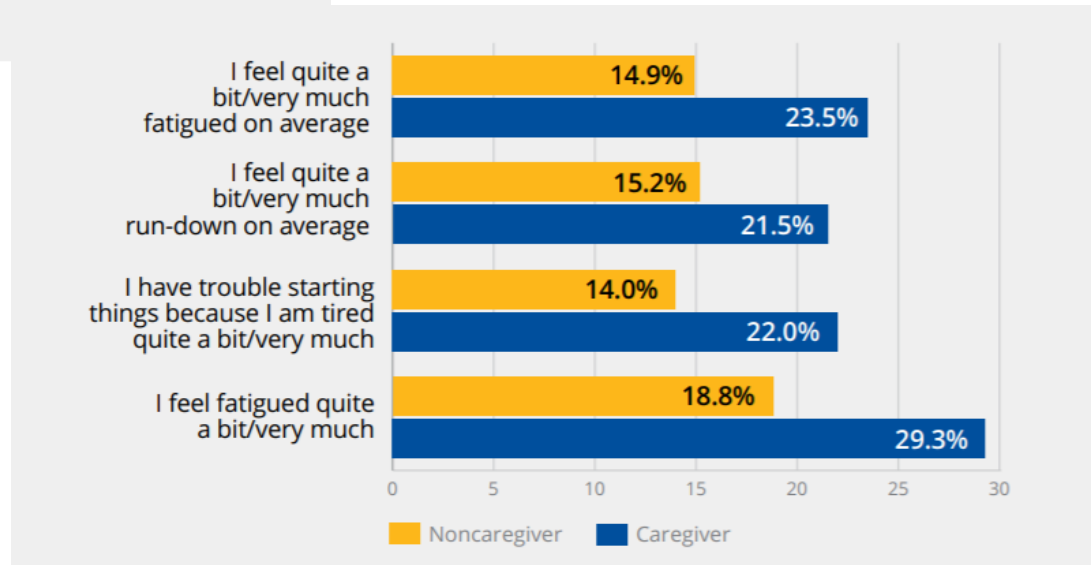
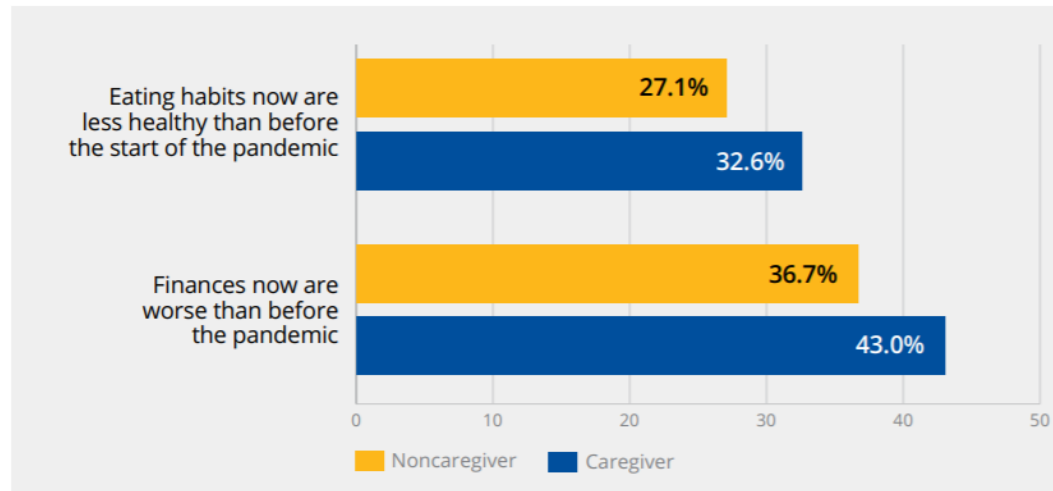
@mindfulreturn

# Effects of COVID-19 on Family Caregivers

## (Univ. of Pittsburgh)

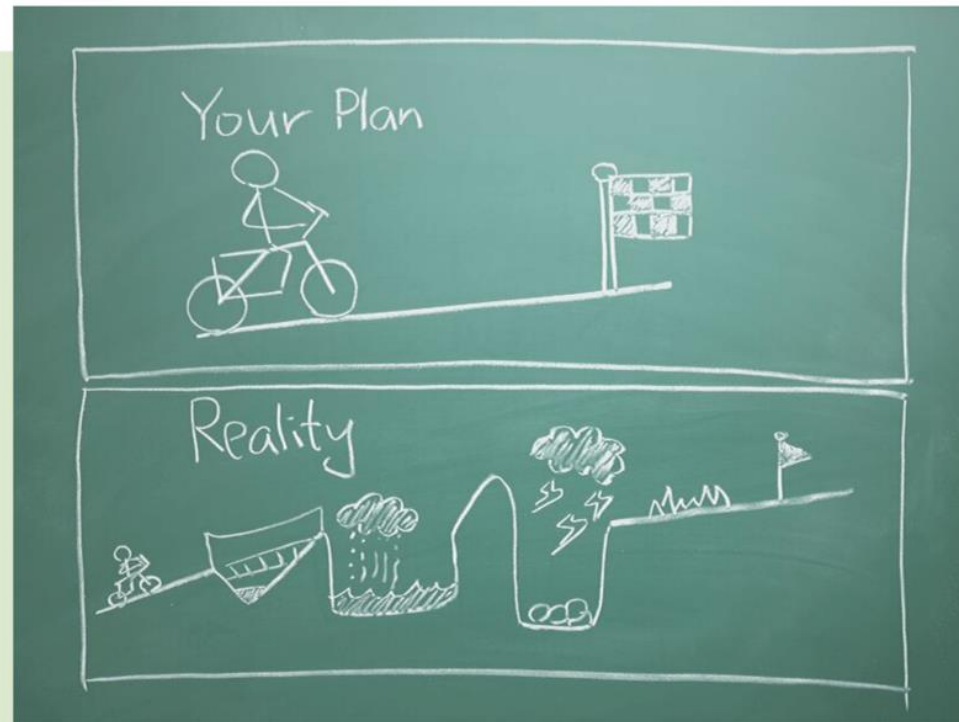
### PERCEIVED COVID-19 IMPACTS ON HEALTH AND FUNCTION

Family caregivers were more likely to perceive recent negative changes and impacts on health and function than noncaregivers. The following differences were observed:



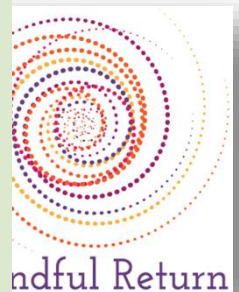
# Return is a Process – NOT an Event

## EXPECTATION VS. REALITY



[www.AshleyComegys.com](http://www.AshleyComegys.com)

@AshleyComegysLCSW



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn

**COMPARISON  
IS THE THIEF  
OF JOY.**

---

*Theodore Roosevelt*



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn



# About Lori and Jeremy



# Our Plan for Today

1 – 4 Themes for Successful Transitions

2 – What Top Employers Do Differently

3 – Best Practices for Tracking ROI



@mindfulreturn



# 4 Themes for Successful Transitions



@mindfulreturn

# #1: Mindful Mindset



@mindfulreturn

# The Traumas of This Past Year: Fight, Flight, FREEZE

“What’s Happening in Our Nervous  
Systems,” with Christine Runyan



**We have endured a “species-level trauma.”**



@mindfulreturn

# Feel All the Conflicted Feelings...And Declare What You Won't Give Up

## *Journal Prompt: 5 Pandemic Practices I Refuse to Abandon*

1. Weekly family movie nights
2. Weeding my vinca
3. Scheduling declared “alone time”
4. Self-massage
5. Ending my shower with 30 seconds of cold water



Mindful Return

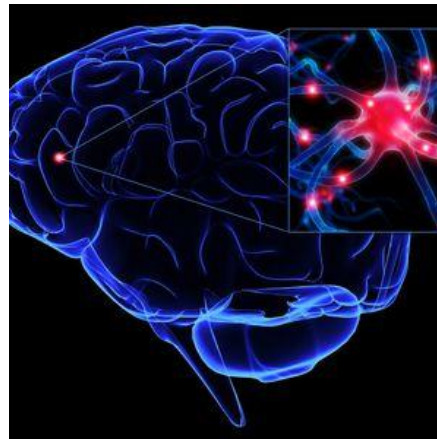
@mindfulreturn

# It's Okay to Start Small...

Why?

Because that's all it takes to begin shifting a mood...

17 seconds of holding positive thoughts and feelings and your mind will begin its transition from a negative state toward an uplifted state



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn

# Micro-Mindfulness Practices



ISS = Intention, Stretch, Savor

Pause (perfect for the commute)



@mindfulreturn

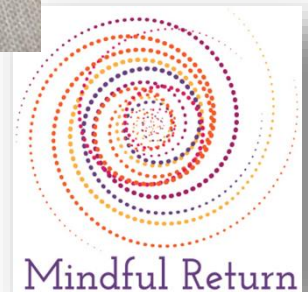
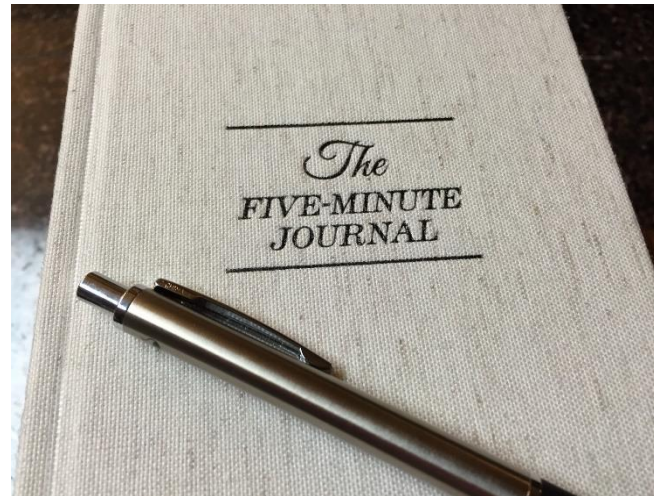


# My Own Micro-Mindfulness Practices



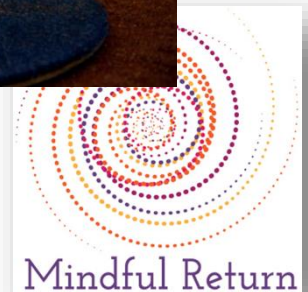
Transition & Separation Rituals

Find the Good:  
Gratitude Journal



@mindfulreturn

# The Power of Centering

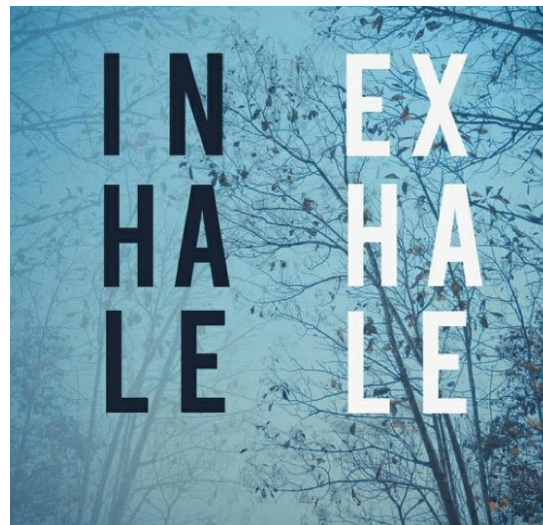


@mindfulreturn

# Center to Connect to Your Body

- Feel your feet on the floor (helps move your attention from your thinking mind to your body)
- Take a deep breath in for 4 seconds
- Release your breath for 6 seconds, lengthening your head, neck, and spine
- Breathe again, focusing on the center of your body

[Can you center between calls?]



@mindfulreturn

# Reflections on Guilt

**“Alloparents” have been critical to child rearing for pretty much all of human history.**

From [Overwhelmed: Work, Love and Play when No One Has the Time](#) by Brigid Schulte:

[Context: Brigid is interviewing Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, an evolutionary anthropologist, and they're discussing Kung women in the Kalahari Desert in Africa, 2,000 years ago] *“The whole idea that mothers stayed at camp and the men went off to hunt? No way! These women were walking thousands of miles every year with their children. Or if it was not safe, they were leaving them back at camp.” She pauses to drive that point home: **Sometimes mothers left their children back at camp. The children were with their fathers, older siblings, grandparents, relatives, and other trusted, nurturing adults- people Hrdy calls “alloparents” (“allo” means “other than” in Greek). “It’s natural for mothers to work. It’s natural for mothers to take care of their children,” she says. “What’s unnatural is for mothers to be the sole caretaker of children. What’s unnatural is not to have more support for mothers.”***



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn

## #2 Tackling the Logistics



@mindfulreturn

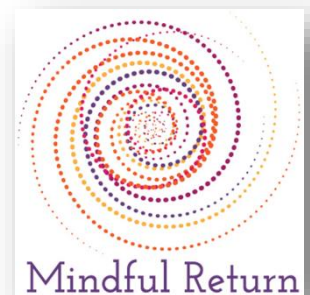


# Need Better Focus? Try the Pomodoro Method

- Work on **one** project, with e-mail & social media off, for 25 minutes.
- Then, a 5-minute break.
- Mind wanders to another task? Simply write it down and go back to the task at hand.
- Repeat.



In Cal Newport's language (from *Deep Work*), this removes the need to “**mentally litigate** again and again what you should and should not be doing...”



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn



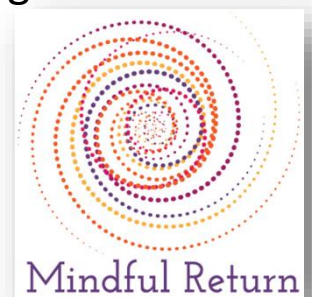
# Start Each Day with Your “MIT”

**Most  
Important  
Task**



Daniel Pink talks about this in “Pinkcast 1.2: A simple trick for getting the right stuff done”.

**WRITE IT DOWN THE NIGHT BEFORE!!!**



@mindfulreturn

*An important boundary-setting quote, by Brené Brown:*

"I also practice setting and holding boundaries. Saying no is hard when you're trying to please everyone, but it's way easier than feeling resentful. My boundary mantra is, **'Choose discomfort over resentment.'** If you are coming toward me with a PTO sign-up sheet and you see me quickly close my eyes and start chanting – you'll know exactly what I'm saying."

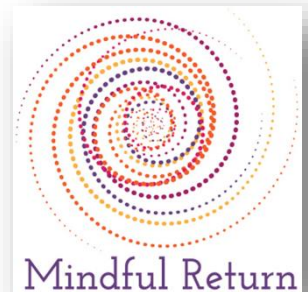


@mindfulreturn

# Example: Night Time Shutdown



- Focus on Your “Why”
  - Declared Time
- Accountability Partner
  - Shut-Down Mantra
- Enjoyable Next Activity

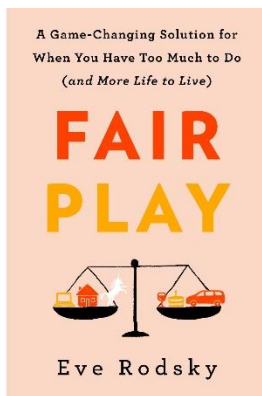


@mindfulreturn

# Re-Negotiating Homefront Tasks: A Script



- **Step away.** (Say nothing when you're in the height of annoyance.)
- **Shared commitments.** Say out loud what you are both committed to.
- **Articulate a short version of the facts,** as you see them. (Don't wax on.)
- **State a specific request.** For example, "My request is that we sit down together for 30 minutes tonight, after kid bedtime, to map out all the chores and tasks we know need to get done. Will you join me in doing this tonight?"



foreword  
by gloria steinem

dr

the ball

achieving more  
by doing less

read by the author

tiffany  
dufu

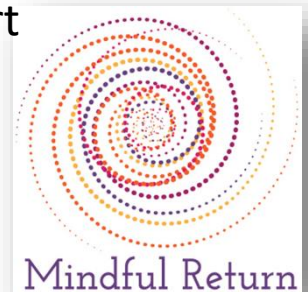


@mindfulreturn

# Consolidate Life Chaos



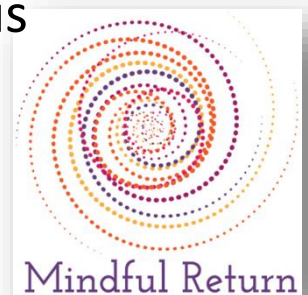
My “Saturday Basket” – an answer to the problem Cal Newport describes as “the ability of incomplete tasks to dominate our attention.”



@mindfulreturn

# What's the Agenda for the Saturday Meeting?

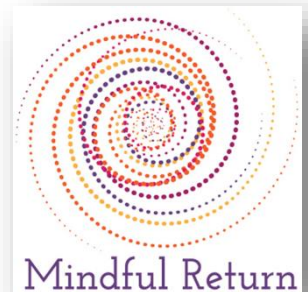
- Next week's schedule
  - Who's on point for child care any given day if a kiddo gets sick
  - Rough outline of food plans
- Money
  - Paying bills
  - End-of-month check-in
- Exercise
- Ordering anything we need on Amazon
- Filling out paperwork, permission slips, etc.
- Monthly date night – scheduling + contacting babysitters
- Scheduling time alone and time with friends – for each of us
- Reflecting on the week's "mindful moments"



@mindfulreturn



# Childcare: Stable today...not tomorrow?



@mindfulreturn

# Communicate Quickly

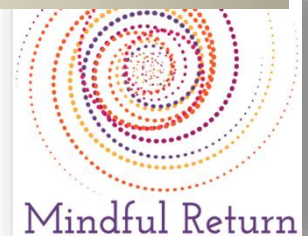


- Here's what's happening;
- Here is how I plan to deal with it;
- Here's where I have flexibility;
- Here is where I don't have flexibility; and
- Here are some ideas for who will be my backup / possibilities for problem solving or addressing the situation when I return.



@mindfulreturn

# Radical Acceptance (& Fast!)



@mindfulreturn

# Other Miscellaneous Trips & Tricks



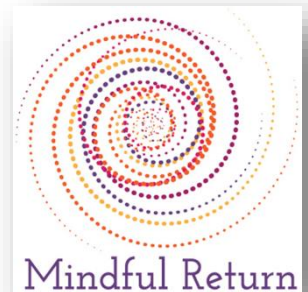
Don't return on a  
Monday!



Phase baby into childcare  
*before* your return



Block pumping times in  
advance, when possible



@mindfulreturn

# #3 Turning Return Into Leadership



@mindfulreturn

# Think, and jot down a few notes:

---

**1**

**3**

**5**

Skills you've gained from parenthood  
that are also useful at work



@mindfulreturn



# What Can You Model?

Inclusive Behaviors

Setting Appropriate Boundaries

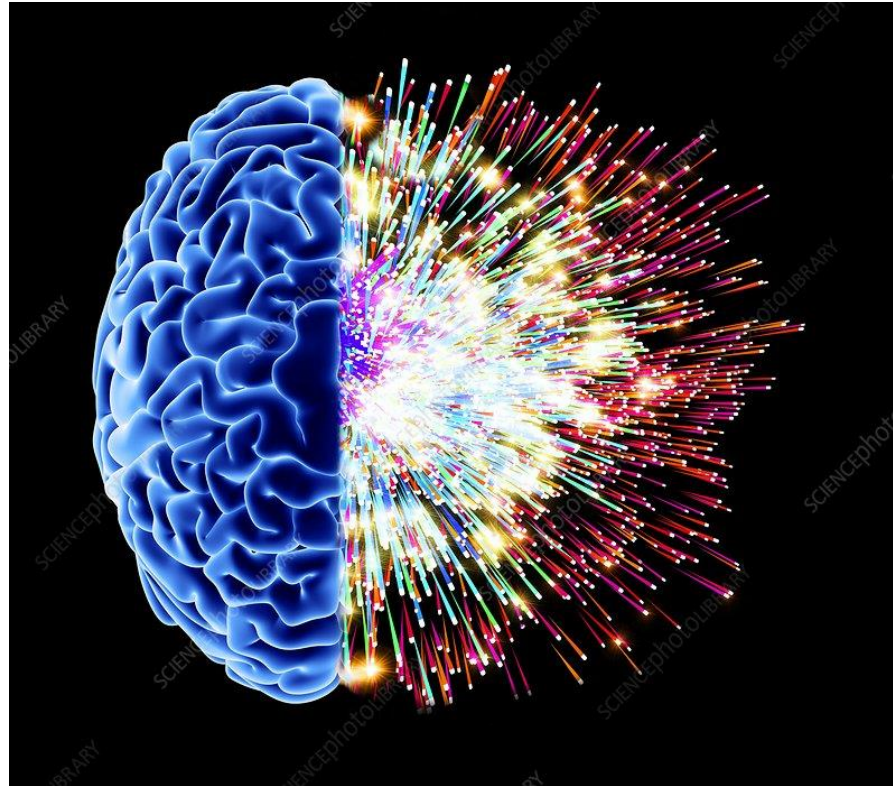
Healthy Work Habits

Finding the Good

Checking in on Colleagues



# Parenthood = Brain Explosion (Literally)



“...the greatest potential for neuroplasticity in the adult human experience is in the year surrounding the birth of one’s child” – *Dr. Ruth Feldman (neuroscientist)*



@mindfulreturn

# Amy Henderson's 5 "Career-Critical Skills" Parenthood Can Unlock

- Emotional Intelligence
- Courage
- Resilience
- Productivity & Efficiency
- Ambition & Motivation



<https://www.moothermag.com/benefits-of-working-moms/>



@mindfulreturn

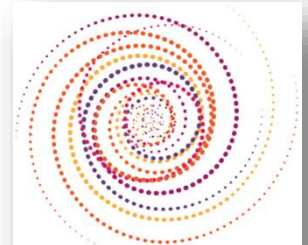
# #4 Staying in Community



@mindfulreturn

# Community: Find your people!

- Be intentional about reconnecting in the office
- Be inclusive in reconnection practices
- Remember friends outside of work for helpful perspectives



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn



# Capitalization: Share Your Wins!



@mindfulreturn

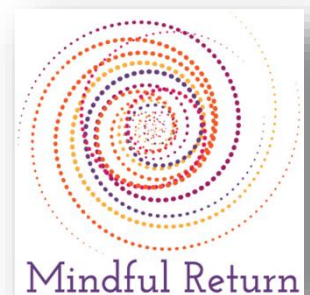


# What Top Employers Do Differently



@mindfulreturn

# What Top Companies Do Differently *for New Parents*



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn

Policy Changes

Childcare  
Assistance

**For All  
Parents**

Leave,  
Creditable  
Hours, and PTO

Mental Health,  
Education, & Load  
Reduction Efforts

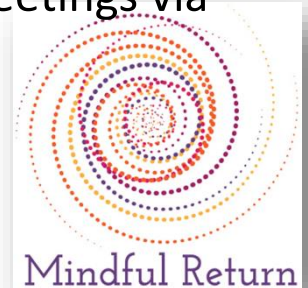


Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn

# Policy Changes

- Blackout hours on meetings, for childcare needs
- Abandoning "use-or-lose" vacation policy
- Adopting policy of 45-minute meetings, instead of 1 hour
- Remote work permitted
- Flexible work hours permitted
- Opening enrollment / disenrollment period for dependent care flex benefits to allow employees to make changes
- Mandatory COVID-related manager training (e.g., on how to do performance evaluations during COVID, that takes into account an understanding that certain employees had a reduced potential for impact due to COVID)
- Encourage meetings to be taken "off video"
- Designation of "no Zoom zones" (e.g., 12-1 pm)
- Zoom-free Fridays (or at least, eliminate expectations of joining meetings via video)



@mindfulreturn

# Childcare Assistance

- \$5K childcare stipend for additional childcare-related expenses due to COVID
- \$100/day for friend/relative to watch children
- Care benefits to help identify caregivers and tutors. Examples:
  - **Urban Sitter:** “Find a sitter for your pod, tutor for distance learning, full-time nanny or last minute sitter.” (<https://www.urbansitter.com/>)
  - **Winnie:** Helps locate daycare centers licensed for school-age care/tutoring (<https://winnie.com/school-care>)
  - **Helpr:** “Care Share Pods” help match to nannies + caregivers (<https://www.helpr-app.com/>)
  - **Apiari:** “Child care for every situation” (<https://theapiari.com/>)
  - **Swing Education:** Matches certified teachers with home pods (<https://www.pods.swingeducation.com/>)
  - **Flexible:** “On-demand virtual childcare”, 30-minute and 60-minute sessions (<https://flexablecare.com/>)
  - **Care.com:** membership with \$50 credit and subsidized copay
  - **Bright Horizons:** Back up care (<https://www.brighthorizons.com/>)



@mindfulreturn

# Leave, Creditable Hours, & PTO - Examples

- Paid caregiver leave, and “creditable” caregiving hours toward billable target
- Option to reduce to 80% schedule at 90% pay or 60% schedule at 70% pay
- Extra schedule company holidays
- Closed every Friday over the summer
- 2-3 month leave of absence at 25% pay
- Unlimited PTO (up to 10 business days at a time)

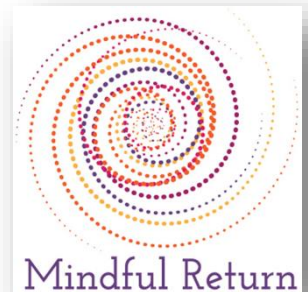


@mindfulreturn



# Mental Health, Education, & Load Reduction Efforts

- Services through EAPs
- Workshops and educational sessions on time-management, boundary-setting, parenting advice, and burnout
- Working parent retreats + group coaching
- Capacity-sharing pilots
- Concierge services



@mindfulreturn

# Best Practices for Tracking ROI



@mindfulreturn

# We Measure What Matters

- What % of your employees are caregivers? (By office? By practice group / division?)
- What % of employees who have departed since COVID began have been caregivers?
- What % of offered parental leave are the women in your organization currently taking? What % are the men currently taking?
- Can you add a caregiver identifier on your EEO-1?



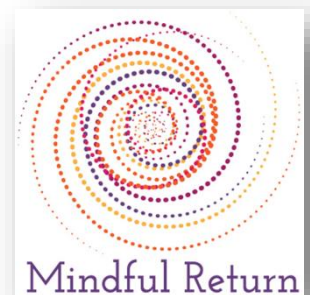
Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn

# Does you have a working parent or caretiver affinity group or ERG?

- How many members?
- Do you compensate the leaders of the group for their efforts?
- What % of all parents join?
- How many events does the group hold? How many people attend?
- How many events are held in collaboration with other affinity groups?

**Working Parent Group Network**  
**[www.mindfulreturn.com/wpgn](http://www.mindfulreturn.com/wpgn)**



@mindfulreturn

# Keeping Today's Conversation Alive

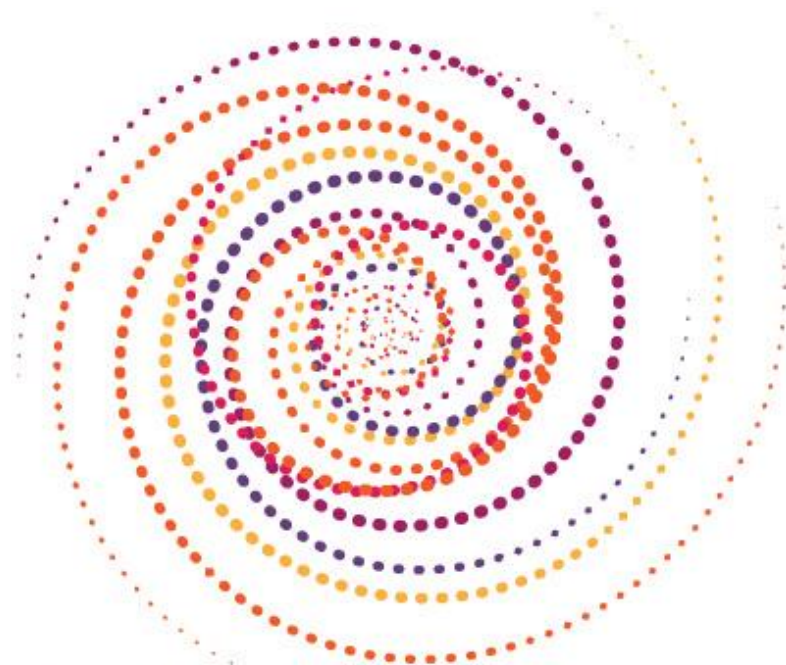


@mindfulreturn

# Don't Go Through a Return from Parental Leave Alone: Join a Session of Mindful Return

## Next Sessions Start:

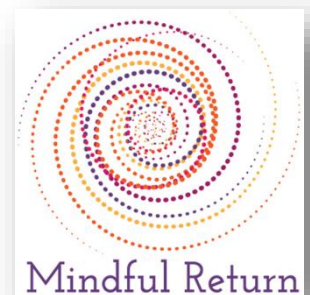
- July 5
- September 13
- November 1



Mindful Return

## Courses for:

- New Moms
- New Dads
- Parents of Special Needs Children (of Any Age)
- Managers of New Parents



Mindful Return

@mindfulreturn



# How to Find Mindful Return Online

---



For Info About the  
Courses:

[mindfulreturn.com/for-employers](https://mindfulreturn.com/for-employers)  
[mindfulreturn.com/e-course](https://mindfulreturn.com/e-course)  
[mindfulreturn.com/paternityleavecourse](https://mindfulreturn.com/paternityleavecourse)  
[mindfulreturn.com/specialneeds](https://mindfulreturn.com/specialneeds)

Read More &  
Register for  
Saturday Secrets:



+



[mindfulreturn.com](https://mindfulreturn.com)



- [Lori@mindfulreturn.com](mailto:Lori@mindfulreturn.com)  
- [Jeremy@mindfulreturn.com](mailto:Jeremy@mindfulreturn.com)



- [@mindfulreturn](https://twitter.com/mindfulreturn)



- [mindfulreturn](https://www.instagram.com/mindfulreturn)



Clubhouse



- [facebook.com/mindfulreturn](https://facebook.com/mindfulreturn)



Mindful Return

[@mindfulreturn](https://twitter.com/mindfulreturn)