

How to return to work successfully after a fatigue-related absence

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What we'll cover today

Objective of today: to learn how to start approaching the practical actions that will help your return to work go as successfully as possible, allowing you to use your time off to heal.

1. Introduction and key points
2. My 5 top tips for a successful return:
 - Tip 1 – How to manage your absence
 - Tip 2 – How to know if you're ready to start contemplating a return
 - Tip 3 – How to use Occupational Health to help rather than hinder your return
 - Tip 4 – How to ensure Day 1/Week 1 go well
 - Tip 5 – Helpful communication tips

Key points

Some key points before I start

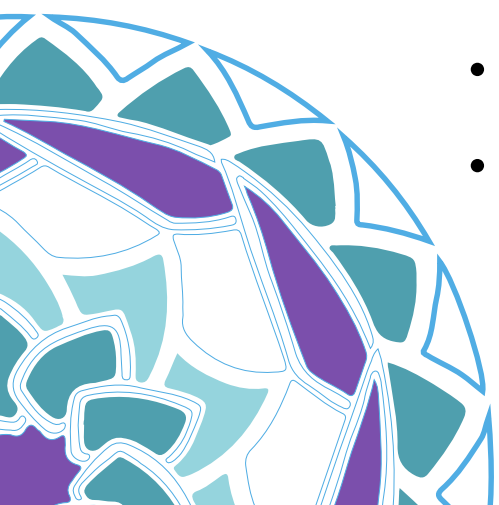
Assumptions

- You're either doing much better than you were, and so this topic is becoming a reality
- Or...you're earlier in your journey, perhaps only recently signed off, and keen to know what to prepare for.

What makes me qualified to talk about this topic?

- I've been there myself!
- And, professionally, I've now helped hundreds of people achieve a return to work.

Next: Pacing



An important message about Pacing

- A vital part of anyone's health rescue journey
- Hopefully you're already pacing well!
- But ask yourself if you have enough STRUCTURE to your approach
- Are you confident about the types of rest that help you most?
- Do you have a way to know how much effort you can comfortably expend in a day – so that you can make confident decisions about what to use it on each day?
- If the answer is "No" to any of these, I really encourage making this your current priority.

Next: manage absence



Tip 1 – How to manage your absence

- The best Returns I've seen, are those who had supportive employers
- A great way to maintain a supportive employer is to keep in contact while you're off
- Monthly check-ins allow them to better understand what you're going through
- And for you to feel connected/up to date
- Update your boss in a positive way – even if there's not much progress to share yet:
 - "I'm pleased to say I've figured out some helpful things since we last spoke – I've still got a way to go before I'm ready to come back, but I'm feeling more hopeful than I was"
- **PRIMARY TIP: Manage things up front as much as possible:** Start to mention the prospect of a phased return nice and early on:
 - "I can't wait to be back, and I'd rather do that sooner than later on a phased basis than wait until I'm completely better"
 - Make sure they understand you'll be returning **while still continuing your recovery journey.**

Next: Ready?



Tip 2 – How to know if you're ready to return

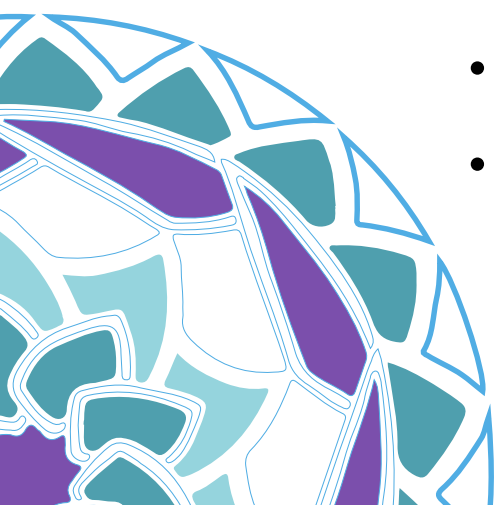
- You need fact-based information – hunches and hopes aren't enough
- **PRIMARY TIP: Test things out to identify what is achievable right now and prioritise increasing your tolerances:**
 - What typical tasks does your job involve?
 - Start to think of ways to incorporate similar activities into your day
 - Non-work related for now!
 - Start small, and assess regularly
- Be honest with yourself
- Keep testing/checking in – things will change

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Next: OH.

Tip 3 – How to use Occupational Health

- Not all employers offer this service
- If you're self-employed – be your own OH/HR/Manager!
- It can be a help or a hindrance - choose to make it the former
- Don't take the off-the-shelf phased return packages – they don't work for fatigue
- **PRIMARY TIP: Go with a proposal, don't wait to be offered an approach**
- Base your proposal on your pacing learnings/test approach
- Be prepared to compromise, but only so far
- OH/Managers don't like problems – they like solutions!



Next: Phased return BP

The perfect phased return blueprint

- Start small – e.g. 2 hours per day/few days per week
- **PRIORITY TIP: Fortnightly phase increases**
- Increase gradually – e.g. by an hour each phase
- Consider running your week Wednesday to Tuesday
- Have a 'go/no-go' meeting diarised with your manager
- Prioritise work over as much as possible – this isn't a time to juggle increased exercise and/or social activity



Next: Stealth phased.

The stealthier phased return

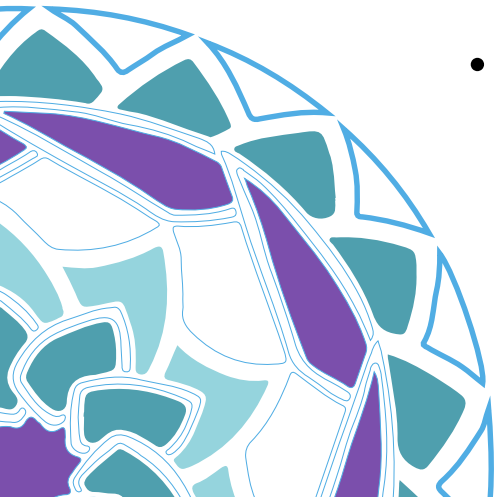
- Some employers resist duration-based phased returns
- But it's still possible to phase things back in - it just needs a different plan!
- Think about these levers:
 - Physical presence
 - Complexity
 - Responsibility
- How can you phase these in over time, to allow you to gradually build up your role again?



Next: Day 1.

Tip 4 – Making Day 1/Week 1 go well

- Consider a soft ‘pre-work’ return (phase zero)
- Share your story in advance
- Explain it’s an invisible illness – they will be seeing the best of you
- **PRIORITY TIP: Be consistent – stick to the agreement**
- Arrange phasing ‘go/no-go’ meetings with your manager
- Be prepared to take sick days
- Be the positive inspiration to others!



Next: Comms

Tip 5 – Communication tips

- Explain that you'll be giving your ALL to the hours you're working – life isn't like that all of the time (yet)
- Think about how much you want to share about your health challenge in advance – and rehearse it
- Your first couple of days will be busy saying hello! (headphone tip)
- Have some ready responses - e.g. to “you look well!” perhaps say “Thanks! I wish the inside matched the outside but I'm getting there”



Next: Re-cap

Quick re-cap

- Maintain contact with your employer
- Test out if you're ready – and what you're ready for
- Manage things up front where possible
- Go with a proposal – don't wait to be told how things will go
- Be consistent – don't confuse
- Give communication some upfront thought.



Next: Next steps

Next steps

- A recording of this webinar will be shared later this evening, along with the slides
- Send me your question if we've been timed out: info@pamelarose.co.uk
- My 1:1 time is full, but do check out my programmes/courses if I can be of any more help:
 - Online pacing course (£95): <https://pamelarose.podia.com/fatiguereset>
 - Four Week Fatigue Rescue group programme (£260) – starts 19th March:
<https://www.pamelarose.co.uk/4weekrescue>

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Now it's question time!



Appendix

Due to time constraints the following two slides about seeking NEW employment didn't make the full slide deck – but I didn't want to leave them out completely:

- When you need to find a new job
- How to secure a new job



When you need to find a new job

If a phased return isn't possible, or your job may no longer serve you well, some tough considerations need to be given to alternative options:

- Access any help available from your current employer
 - Redeployment?
 - Outplacement support?
 - Package?
- Apply some self-career coaching in preparation for a career change:
 - What things do I love doing
 - What am I good at?
 - What do others say I'm good at?
 - What sorts of people do I like being around?



Next: Securing a role

How to secure a new job

- Consider part-time employment if that's the best option
- Decide whether to be honest about your health challenge or not
- There **are** supportive, flexible new employers out there – I've seen them! But you might have to search for them.

- The application process:
 - Ask for help: from a good friend, a previous colleague, or outsource to an expert
 - Use voice dictation if it helps
 - Pace the application – break it into smaller tasks

- The interview:
 - Ask for videoconference if possible
 - Use your health challenge as a proud and positive example
 - Focus on value you can bring, not your vulnerabilities
 - Have a plan to show them how you'll make it work.

