

How to return to work successfully after extended sick leave

Pamela Rose - Fatigue Coach

June 2021



What we'll cover today

Objective of today: to learn how to start approaching the practical and physical actions that will help your return to work go as successfully as possible.

1. Introduction and key points
2. My 5 top tips:
 - Tip 1 – How to know if you're ready to start contemplating a return
 - Tip 2 – How to approach your employer with regards to a phased return
 - Tip 3 – How to use OH to help rather than hinder your return
 - Tip 4 – How to ensure Day 1/Week 1 go well
 - Tip 5 – How to consider a career change
3. Q&A



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 and keen to know what to prepare for, and how to know when that preparation should start.

What makes me qualified to talk about this topic?

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



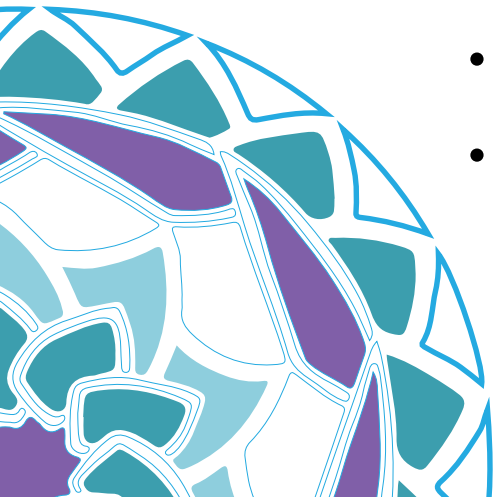
An important message about Pacing

- A vital part of anyone's health rescue journey
- Hopefully you've already been pacing well
- But ask yourself if you have enough STRUCTURE to your approach
- Do you have fact-based information about what you can do in a day? Have you captured key learnings? Can you see your baseline, so that you can stick to it once work tasks are re-introduced?
- If the answer is "No" to any of these, don't worry – I can help. More on that later.



Tip 1 – How to know if you're ready

- You need fact-based information – hunches and hopes aren't enough
- **PRIMARY TIP: Test things out to identify what is achievable:**
 - 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



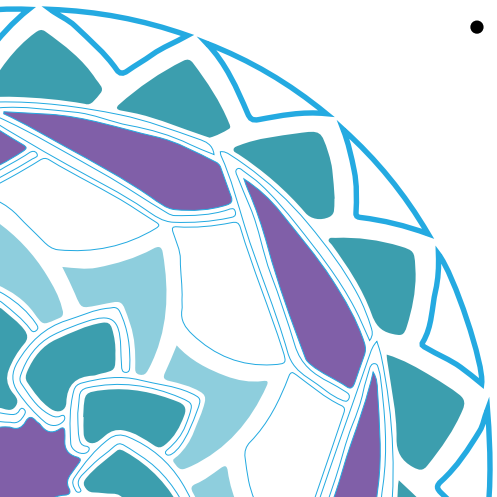
Tip 2 – How to approach your employer

- Have fairly regular contact with them
- Most managers don't understand the first thing about what it's like to be in your situation
- It's important they know what's really going on – be honest
- **PRIMARY TIP: Manage things up front as much as possible!**
 - Bring mention of a phased return into discussions nice and early on
- Make sure they understand you'll be returning **and continuing your recovery journey**
- Gauge how receptive they seem to be
- 'Positivity sandwich' approach to conversations.



Tip 3 – How to use Occupational Health to help rather than hinder your return

- Not all employers offer this service
- 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!



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.



Tip 4 – How to ensure your first days and weeks go well

- Consider a 'secret' earlier return
- Share your story in advance
- Explain it's an invisible illness
- **PRIORITY TIP: Be consistent – stick to the agreement**
- Arrange phasing 'go/no-go' meetings with your manager
- Be prepared to take sick days.



Tip 5 – How to consider a career change

- Access any help available from your current employer
 - Redeployment?
 - Outplacement support?
 - Package?
- Apply some self-career coaching:
 - 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?
 - What are the things I need to be careful about. (E.g. not too physical)



Quick re-cap

- 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
- If a career change is required, try to look at this positively.



Next steps

- A recording of this webinar will be shared later this evening, along with the slides.
- I'll also send a written capture of questions/answers discussed.
- If you feel you would benefit from a more structured pacing approach for a short time, consider my [‘Fatigue Reset: How to crack pacing once and for all’](#) course
 - Use voucher ‘RETURN50’ to get 50% off in July

FATIGUE RESET

Crack pacing once & for all!

- Questions are now welcome

