

THE PUMPING ENTREPRENEUR PROCLAMATION

As a business owner and a mum, here are my top tips, tried and tested for balancing both acts. Print them out and keep them in the place you get ready each morning as a gentle reminder.

1. Your mental health is important to keep an eye on. It's okay to not be okay – to be down and grieve hardships in your business or personal life. Give yourself an opportunity to rebuild your strength because your biggest endurance test is still to come.
2. Working while pregnant is tough, but you've got limited time to get your business sorted. You need to focus the small amount of energy you have and prioritise what will leave your company in the strongest possible position when you're on leave.
3. People will judge you, but remember: It's not you; it's them. Their reaction to your pregnancy reflects far more on their worries than on your competence.
4. You owe it to yourself and your business to plan for this time and transition. Use the time to prepare your business and your team as much as possible. You can use my Maternity Proposal template available at thepumpingentrepreneur.com.
5. Expect the unexpected and have a contingency plan for when the baby arrives. Try to wrap up any last correspondence and tasks at least few weeks before your due date to take the pressure off you and notify your team that they're now the go-to. Surrender to the most important business of all: being a mum on learner plates!
6. Babies don't sleep when you want them to. The expectations I set for myself in the Maternity Proposal had to change. Yours might too. You're not a failure as a boss or a mum either; just take it day by day.
7. Do what you feel is right – for your family, for the people who you care about and for those who rely on you. Be aware that you might face some judgment but smash it as you choose anyway.
8. Outsource your personal work. If you're able to, consider whether you could get a cleaner, meals made easier for you, your laundry done, or anything else that eases your load. You've got enough on your plate with a baby and a business!
9. Lean on your professional network to carry some of the weight. They are all fighting for you to make it through. Trust that you will become a stronger leader following this experience, even if you don't always feel like you are bringing your A-game.
10. Don't be hard on yourself. It's okay that your experience is different to that of other women, and other mothers. It's also okay to feel guilty (and you will sometimes!) Focus on goals that will keep you going.

Trust your team. The prospect of returning to work is difficult. Trust that when you leave, your team will be just fine, and will softly welcome you back when the time is right – perhaps in a smaller capacity, if they've managed well thus far without you.

If there is one thing that I wish I had done more, and which I would recommend more than anything else it's this – be kind to yourself. You're doing everything you can, and you've got this.