Welcome back to the call to both podcast. I am so excited that you're joining me here for today's episode. We are talking about taking a maternity leave as a self employed business owner, which is such a big topic and frankly can feel kind of impossible. So I want to come to you with some of the things that I'm doing because I'm currently planning a maternity leave right now, my third maternity leave as a small business owner.

And I want to give you some encouragement. I really think that with the right planning. You can take time off from your business. Your business can keep running. You can keep making money. And I actually think you could enjoy some of the early newborn days without the added stress of wondering and worrying about the business you're gonna come back to.

So whether you are expecting a baby right now or maybe in the stages of thinking about what this could look like down the road for your family and thinking, okay, maybe I need to get some things set up. So that you can forecast for this in your business. Then I think this episode is going to be a good one for you because I'm gonna walk you through some of the steps that you will need to take, some of the decisions that you're gonna need to make when you're stepping away from your business for a maternity leave as a self employed business owner.

So there's gonna be a mix of sharing about what I'm doing personally, Things that I've done in the past that I learned from that I would love to share with you to help you to have more perspective on like your options and Just things that you'll have to decide because I think this is this is just such a deeply personal Thing to like take a maternity leave, but I hope that some of this is helpful for you So there's going to be some tips, there's going to be some personal stuff, and I'm also going to share um, I think like four or five things that essentially I'm doing strategically for this maternity leave upcoming that really do look different from my first two maternity leaves that I've taken in the past and then kind of Sharing why I'm choosing to do them differently as well.

You're listening to called to both the podcast for ambitious women chasing both business dreams and little ones. I'm your host, joy, Michelle. I'm a wedding photographer turned business coach and founder of photo boss. I have helped thousands of photographers and creatives grow their businesses here on the show.

I teach about topics like visibility, marketing mindset. Productivity and going after your dream life. So if you're a photographer or an entrepreneur, there is something here for you. This is not another business and marketing podcast

telling you to do more, but rather how you can build your business and your income in less time and with greater ease.

Join me here each week for bite-sized and actionable episodes that will encourage you on your call to both journey.

So right now, at the time of this recording. I am about six weeks out from my due date with my third baby, which is, sounds very soon now that I say that out loud. I'm like, okay, we're in the home stretch. So thinking about all these things and planning for a maternity leave is so top of mind for me right now.

So you're gonna get a glimpse into all the things that I'm thinking through. And like I said, I've taken two maternity leaves in the past and they have each looked really different. First because I didn't know how to take a maternity leave. I didn't know what to plan for. I understood the concept of like taking time off and that I would probably want to take time off.

But beyond that, I just didn't know what I didn't know. I was very new to all of this. So, with my first baby, Clara, I had her in the winter and it just so happened to be the off season as a wedding and portrait photographer, which was my primary bread and butter at the time. So, it just sort of worked out that I had this like default time off, but I didn't do a ton of planning beyond that.

By the time I had my second, Louis, we were like thick in the middle, like smack dab in the middle of the pandemic. And so I wasn't doing a lot of shooting, but I was creating a lot more content. And I would say that I got a little more like specific about what I wanted my maternity leave to look like.

Started to plan ahead a little bit as far as like YouTube videos and content. And I had some team in place at the time. So, things started to ramp up a little bit and I knew I needed to plan better, but I still look back on my maternity leave with him and just think like, okay, there were some things that I could have done better.

I probably should have looked at this a little bit differently. And so, taking everything, taking all of that into account. I've really looked at this leave that I'm about to have with my third baby a little differently because of all of that. So it's given me just like some perspective and just experience that I didn't have before.

So there's going to be a few things that I think every woman is going to have to decide. When thinking about a maternity leave. So these are things that I've

decided on, but if you're sitting here thinking, okay, I, I need to know, like, what do I need to be thinking about? The first three things that come to mind are this number one, how much money do I need to be making from the business during the time that I'm taking off?

This is going to really dictate a lot of things for your maternity leave, because whether or not you're drawing a paycheck consistently is going to dictate all sorts of details about how you go about planning. So big, big number that you need to write down. How much money do I want to make from my business during this time off?

The second question you need to ask yourself is what do you want the business to do while you're gone? And what I mean by that is. You know, will you still be publishing content? Does everything pause or do maybe some of your team members have the ability to come in and continue some projects on your behalf?

What does client work look like for you during this time? So what's the business doing while you're gone? And then number three, how long do you plan to take off and what does off mean to you? Once, you know, these three things, you have a money goal, you have a business activities like barometer on the back end, and then you know what your involvement is going to be and how long this is going to be.

You have a complete framework here, like you have, you have the four posts and then we just really need to fill it in. And create more of a plan. The sponsor of today's episode is mama meals as a busy business owner and a soon to be mom of three preparing for my maternity leave has been no small task between the managing the day to day at home and at work.

The last thing that I want to think about is what's for dinner, much less when I've given birth. And that is why I am stocking up on mama meals, organic nourishing meals designed for postpartum recovery specifically. Mama meals are based off of traditional healing practices, feature only the highest quality ingredients and get delivered straight to your front door.

So when the time comes, I will be focusing on rest and recovery and bonding with my new baby and not overthinking what I'm going to feed everyone. Can I get an amen? Give mama meals a try today. And when you do use the code joy to get a discount on your first box. So I want to share with you. Some of the things that I'm doing personally and hopefully this will kind of piece this together for you All right So the first thing that I'm doing this time around is I'm

so much clearer about How much time I really want to take off and I'm planning for three months away from the business It could be a little bit less if baby comes late It could be a little bit more time if baby comes early, but I know That's the amount of time that I want to take off And in the past, I actually didn't know what I wanted for my maternity leave.

And I, I didn't even know if I would want a business after having my, my first baby. Like I, that sounds silly to admit, but one of my biggest fears with becoming a mom was wondering like who I was going to be after and if I was still going to be ambitious and would I still want a business? For that reason, it felt really hard to plan.

I just didn't know who I would be and so I thought, you know, maybe I won't want to run a business anymore. Maybe I'm gonna just want to be a mom and like, that's just where my head would be. And as it turns out, I am more ambitious and de lulu for my goals than ever. I think that's one of the reasons that I didn't plan well was because I was kind of freaking out a little bit that I might become a whole new person, which I now can see that that's a little ridiculous.

Like, I think it's a little bit funny. But I know that a lot of ambitious women have thought similar thoughts. And I also want to say like, if you choose to step away from your business, I admire that choice too. Like that's a very valid choice too. So this time around, I know myself a lot better, how I tend to feel in postpartum and what I'm going to need in postpartum.

And so for that reason, I know three months is, is a really good number for me when I have a new baby. I get sucked into newborn land fully. I am sleep deprived, I want to be home in my bed, I want to be cuddling that baby, and I'm really not the girl who like has a baby and then a couple days later is like out doing stuff.

Like going to church, going to events, at brunch, like I just want to go into like seclusion and hibernation. That's just who I am. I already know that. The world is gone to me for a few weeks after I have a baby and I'm just going to embrace that this time and fully realize that that's who I am and that's what I need.

And so I need to prepare for that. I also subscribe so much to this this concept of like the Eastern Chinese medicine mindset of healing now more than ever in postpartum. This whole mindset is all about encouraging new moms to take 30 to 40 days to just heal and rest and refuel. And eat specific foods and drink specific teas.

It's like a whole, it's a whole regimen and I love it. And I think it's so cool. And it's actually called confinement. It's it's, I think it's just such a beautiful concept. And if you look it up, look up like Chinese confinement or the book, the first 40 days, amazing resources. If you've never heard about this, it's, it's fascinating.

And really it's something that in the U. S. I don't think we give a ton of thought to that's just we're such a go, go, go culture that it's so normal to see a mom like two weeks postpartum like running around like nothing just happened, but I just love the idea of embracing this time and eating those healing foods and like truly embracing this, this idea of like rest.

So instead of rushing to make myself feel normal after literally creating an entire person, and that took 10 months. And then giving birth to that person. I'm just not, I'm just not going to do that this time. I'm not going to have that expectation for myself. I've been doing a lot of reading about this and research.

And a lot of studies show that what we do in the weeks after birth just really sets the tone for A woman's health for the rest of her life, and women face all kinds of like mineral deficiencies and issues because of rushing this healing process. So I am not following a 40 days of full on Chinese confinement, but I do plan to follow the 5, 5 5 rule.

So I'm gonna do five days in bed where you're like. In bed fully not doing anything. If you get up, you're only getting up to go to the bathroom five days on the bed So you're like moving a little bit more and this might be the couch like you are mostly Sitting and resting and you might be doing a little bit more but you're still on the bed and then five days So you're easing back into light activities, but I'm still generally trying to be home and resting and like in my bubble, like in that newborn bubble.

So during that time, I'm going to be following some of the recipes in the book, the first 40 days, which I really recommend like every new mom pickup. It's just really cool and it talks about all these principles, but also has some like recipes and concepts to like take this further if you're interested.

None of this is medical advice. This is just what I think would be really cool and what I'm gonna do. So instead of creating a very vague timeline, I'm getting a lot more specific and like I said with Clara, with my firstborn, I didn't really determine this and because of that I ended up photographing a wedding, I think it was like seven, six or seven weeks postpartum and it was really hard.

It was hard to be constantly pumping in the bathroom, in the car between like ceremony and reception. It was hard to leave my baby at all and then hope that she would take a bottle with my husband, which she didn't. And overall, I think was just really like emotionally taxing. And now that I think about this timeline.

That feels really, really short to me, and it might not to you, and that's perfectly okay. You need to know yourself, and I can totally see how working might help someone else feel this sense of, like, normalcy, and it might actually be a good thing for them. But I personally would not do a full workday event that close to delivery.

Ever again, like ever again. I don't, I will not be committing to anything that big in the first 12 weeks. The second thing I'm doing to prepare for maternity leave is that I'm actually planning my postpartum meals. Well, first of all, I'm just planning them, which is new for me, but I'm planning these meals ahead of time.

I'm doing some batching. I'm getting some help from my family, but I'm also using a company called Mama Meals. And this is something that I did not do well with either of my first two kids. I don't think I batched a single thing with Clara. I mean, we did a little bit with Lewis. And I will say, looking back, like my husband and I found food to be like such a source of stress and tension postpartum, especially when we're trying to handle doctor's appointments and feeding issues and meeting with a lactation consultant and sleep issues and just like normal healing.

The last thing you really want to be thinking about is food. So I'm determined to have a very different level of preparedness this time. Cause I really, really, like I said, I want to prioritize rest a little bit more. So anything that I can do to prepare for true rest within the business, but even outside of the business, like in this way, I'm going to be doing because as a mom to three, I am just so aware of how hard it's going to be to get any kind of rest.

I think food is a big part of this. So to get ready for this, we actually bought a fridge freezer combo to go in our garage so that we can have the space to fully be stocked. And have the space and the food and all of this stuff fully set aside and just know that whether we have some meals brought to us, you know, or not, like we will have good nutritious food no matter what.

So I've been doing a little bit of like baking and batching and just recipe doubling. So that I can slowly build up a stock, but I'm really glad that I have mama meals as well. In addition to that, because I can grab, like these are going

to be so easy to grab and heat and eat these things that are specifically designed for a postpartum mom.

And that way we have a little more variety. There's things that I've made and then there's also things in the Mama Meals box that I got that are going to be different and just, it's going to be nice to have nutritious foods that are different and fun that I didn't have to make myself. The third thing I'm doing is that I am planning to continue to pay myself my full bi weekly salary.

I don't even remember fully. I think with my previous maternity leaves, I wasn't even drawing consistent salaries from my business in like, oh, every two weeks money would hit my personal account from my business account. I was probably doing like once a month draws, and it was probably varying quite a bit.

Whereas now, my family relies on my income to make our lives happen every month. Like, the budget makes sense in part because of my business. To me, this was a non negotiable for my maternity leave. So I did some planning, and I'm going to walk you through a little bit of that planning so that you can think about this for your leave as well.

So I really, I'm looking at my cashflow in advance. I'm adding up how many paychecks it's going to be that I need to account for that I need to have saved for. I created some income goals around that number and. I did all of this through Profit First to, like, support how I'm accounting and how I'm allocating in my business.

So the first step you'll need to do in this, like, calculation financial portion would be to calculate how much you need to pay yourself. And business expenses during the duration of your leave. So I want to make sure that the business can function every single month with all of those costs, the team costs, software subscription, all of that.

But I also want to make sure that I'm going to get paid every two weeks and I don't really have to think about this. Like it's all set aside. Step number two is going to be to identify how much you need to save in advance. So you know, how much revenue do you need to come in so that you will have these things set up both in owner's pay and in business operation costs.

And then step three, I would recommend to use profit first or another very similar method to make sure that that money is set aside. So I can log in right

now to my Relay account, which is where I bank. And C, the separated out, named out, like where is my, like all of this. So where's my owner's pay?

Where's the business operations? Where's my tax money? All that stuff is laid out and I can see like how, how close are we to reaching these milestones that need to be reached for me to successfully continue to pay myself. Now another reason that I want to continue to pay myself besides the fact that my family relies on this income and I, I feel that that's a necessity.

Is also because I want to run a business that can continue to pay me whether I work or not. It's almost like, this is just kind of the business I want to run. It's like out of principle, I want to be able to step away and have a baby and pay myself. It feels important for me to see that my business can do that and to prove that my, my business can do that.

Because then I know that my business is an asset to my life. It's allowing me to be a whole person and not just someone who comes and works in the business. And then the whole thing comes to a screeching halt the second I leave. So this is like such a satisfying thing, just like as a business owner in general, to be able to look at this and say like, this is possible for me.

Like I can step away, I can go into newborn land for a few months, and I am still going to have money every two weeks. coming in from the business that I built. Now depending on how far out you are from your maternity leave passive income and longer payment plans for your services are some things that you might want to start to think about so that you're planning for predictable cash flow without as much of your involvement in having to do the work in the moment, right?

So like those longer payment plans, those retainer client work Passive income of all kinds. Like those are going to be things that you definitely want to be thinking about, particularly if you have time on your side and you have, like, you're planning for this, maybe you're not even pregnant yet, but you're planning that is so like advantageous of you right now to be like thinking, okay.

Where can I weave in the passive income and like I said, some of those different payment models. So if you're interested in this topic and you want to hear a little bit more, a great next lesson for you if you want to dive deeper would be episode 74 here on the podcast. It's called Building Diverse Revenue Streams.

And it's the beginning of a very juicy series, one of the most popular series here on the podcast, all about building more revenue streams outside of your

services. Another thing I'm doing to get ready for maternity leave is I am batching content that will go live while I'm gone. And this is because I really see my content as the sales engine for the business.

And because of that, I don't want to pause it. I think I could and I have a big library of content that would continue to work for me. But I do want to continue to show up for you and to create content, and that's a big part of what I do to do that. So this entails pre recording podcast episodes, getting those over to my team.

So like my team is going to help me produce and edit and create this content so that I don't have to do this alone. And then I have another team member that's going to be doing some optimizing and making sure that things are dialed in for search for Google, like all the SEO related stuff. To make this a possibility.

A couple of tools that are really helping me to make this happen that are not really unique to maternity leave, but I feel like are worth mentioning is that I will be using Riverside FM for a lot of my recording. I plan my episodes in notion track where I'm at with them, the progress with them. And my team also kind of marks episodes as.

In production or finished or scheduled based on where they're at, and that can be so helpful for me to see the progress. So all of that is happening in notion and in terms of actually batching this content. I'm going to be doing a combination of solo episodes, probably some re airs of really popular episodes that went live in the past, but it's been such a long time since they aired that I just think they're worth re airing.

And I will probably also be calling on some of my fellow business owners to contribute some audio to the podcast so that We have some really fresh information and I've just, I love when, when people do like contributing audios or swaps, things like that. So I'm going to be pulling a few different types of content together to make this possible.

All right. So quick recap. Here's what I'm doing differently for maternity leave. This time around, I'm taking a full three months, three months off. I am pre planning my finances so that I can keep paying myself. I will be batching content out ahead of time, stocking up on postpartum meals, and following the 5 5 5 healing approach.

If you are planning for a future maternity leave, I hope that this helps get you started. And I'm not sure what the rest of my year is going to look like, but I do

have big goals for the year regardless of a growing family. And I truly believe this is going to be one of the biggest years of business success that I've ever had.

I just refuse to see having a baby as anything that would ruin my business plans or jeopardize my success. But rather something that requires creative solutions around. Is it a challenge? Yes. But it's not going to affect me beyond that. We're just, we just need creative solutions. And that is another reason why I think becoming a mom has made me a better business owner.

It forces you to be better. You simply do not have the time that you once did, but that doesn't mean that you cannot reach your goals. Every business and every baby is different. So, take what works for you from this episode and please leave what doesn't. Whether you fully unplug or you stay lightly involved, you can make it work in a way that supports your life and your business.

If this episode was helpful, I would love to hear from you. DM me on Instagram. Let me know your biggest takeaway or share your own plans for your upcoming maternity leave. And if you know another creative business owner who needs to hear this, Please send this episode their way. Thank you so much for listening to the show.

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