

Parental leave – A leadership opportunity

At Novartis, we believe in the importance of balancing professional and personal responsibilities. This belief is embodied through our inclusive parental leave policy, which supports all our people in taking the time they need to be with their families during significant life events. To understand how this truly supports our colleagues we invited Sumeet, Global Head of Service Enablement & Governance, People Services & Solutions to share his story with us.

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Supporting moments that matter

Traditionally in India, individuals often prioritize work over vacations or personal time. Although this view is gradually evolving, societal norms frequently label mothers as the primary caregivers and managers of household duties. I personally believe that caregiving is a shared responsibility, and the availability of parental leave provided the opportunity for me to show up as both a partner and a parent when it mattered the most.

When my first daughter was born, I wasn't working with Novartis, and I had just 5 days leave. By the time my second daughter arrived I was at Novartis, about to take on an exciting new senior role. At Novartis if you become a parent through birth, adoption or surrogacy you are offered at least 14 weeks paid parental leave, which is incredible. Still, I asked myself, was now really the right time to avail of my parental leave? How will my new team manage? Would this impact my career trajectory and how would it be perceived by my peers? It took careful consideration and courage for me to have an open conversation about my apprehensions.

I'm happy to say that my choice to take my parental leave was met with overwhelming support from both my manager Holger and my colleagues. Their encouragement and understanding played a crucial role in easing my concerns about the impact on our team and my work responsibilities. Looking back, their support really embodies the mission of the work that our team does; to create human-centered experiences. From interview to offer, from promotion letter and throughout the learning journey, these are all milestones where People Services & Solutions strive to make a positive impact. And this was one of my personal milestones.



Sumeet, Global Head of Service Enablement & Governance, People Services & Solutions

Few companies in India offer this kind of benefit to their people, but I am fortunate to be working with Novartis who offer such inclusive and supportive policies. After all, they led me to make one of the best decisions I have ever made.

A transformative experience

During the two and a half months of my leave, I experienced a profound transformation. I was able to really connect with my daughters, understanding them better than before, and truly support my wife, who had resumed work. It's these precious moments with your loved ones that cannot be replaced. This time away from work allowed me to reflect on the importance of balancing my personal and professional life, and I returned to work feeling more engaged and invigorated. But the support didn't just end when I came back. Key to the Novartis culture is a strong commitment to our people to maintain a healthy work-life balance and there are opportunities for our people to be flexible about when and where we work. This hybrid approach helps us to learn, grow and work together more effectively.

I would urge anybody reading this to reflect on their work-life balance on a regular basis. That's a value I carry very close to my heart and it's at the core of the type of leader and father I want to be. I'm incredibly proud that Novartis supports me in a way that allows me to live through my values, which means I bring my best self to my work.

I saw this parental leave as a leadership opportunity, because I was able to set an example for my team and colleagues. I could go back and connect with what truly matters, my family. Since retuning I have seen a shift in the conversations and a stronger support of both fathers and mothers juggling work and parenthood. Few companies in India offer this kind of benefit to their people, but I am fortunate to be working with Novartis who offer such inclusive and supportive policies. After all, they led me to make one of the best decisions I have ever made.

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