

Tips for new parents



There's arguably no event in life more significant than the birth of your first child. For many, becoming a parent can be a joyful experience, but it's not without its challenges.

Despite the number of resources, books and opinions on parenting, nothing can truly prepare you for how life changes.

Understanding how to look after yourself and your relationship while caring for a new baby may help relieve some of the uncertainty, and prevent you from becoming overwhelmed.

Knowing how to communicate with your partner during times of stress and fatigue, and how and where to ask for help, will help your family to not just survive, but thrive during this special time.

Nurture important relationships

Before becoming a parent, you were an adult with interests, skills, likes and dislikes, and this doesn't need to change after having a baby.

Nurturing important relationships you had before becoming a parent is key to keeping your sense of self as you embark on your new life.

One of these important relationships is the one you have with yourself. This might involve asking for help from others so you can have time for activities you enjoyed before becoming a parent.

Try to spend regular time with supportive people who understand your need to be flexible and can help you focus on other areas of your life as well as celebrating the milestones of your baby.

Sleep

It's no secret that sleep is one of the biggest changes new parents face. Many will tell you to 'sleep when baby sleeps', but most new parents find that is the only time they have to themselves to relax, shower, do chores, or catch up on other things.

One way this advice could be applied is trying to go to bed early and rethinking what is crucial for you to get done each day.

Re-prioritising may allow you to make some room to look after yourself, and allow you to rest and recharge when you can.

Physical health

The first few months of parenting can be more challenging if your body is not getting enough nutrition, rest and activity.

Try to eat a balanced diet or take supplements, especially if you are breastfeeding. Some physical activity will also help keep your mind and body healthy.

Going for short walks with your baby can break up the day, give you some fresh air, and allow you to socialise with others.

Intimacy

Pregnancy, birth and caring for a baby are not exactly the best combination when it comes to physical intimacy with your partner.

Tiredness, hormonal changes, stress, the responsibility of being a parent, physical changes, or pain can get in the way of you being physically intimate.

As you are adjusting to the changes as a couple, keep your communication open and try to understand and respect each other's needs, even though you may not be able to or want to respond to these needs immediately.

Finding other ways to be intimate can help. Having a meal together, non-sexual touch, quick dates, or small meaningful conversations regularly can help re-build intimacy.

Parenting

You will need your communication skills for this one. If you haven't already, it's a good idea to discuss your parenting preferences with your partner to understand each other's point of view with the aim of coming to an agreement.

You might have a different upbringing to your partner and if you don't discuss this beforehand and agree on some points, these differences can challenge the harmony of your relationship.

Roles in the household

It's easy to make assumptions about who 'should' be doing what around the house.

Who is going to be the main income earner? Who will do the chores? Who will take time off work if your child is sick?

These may seem like easy questions to answer, but having the conversation, committing to ongoing communication, and being open to change in the future, can help to prevent conflict.

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Seeking help

As parents, it sometimes feels like we 'should' have all the answers and be able to manage on our own. But being able to ask for - and accept - help is important to make the transition to parenthood a smooth one.

Relationships Australia can provide support for you as an individual, or for you and your partner as a couple.

We offer a range of support services including information, counselling and educational courses. For more information or to make an appointment, contact us on 1300 364 277.

About Relationships Australia

Relationships Australia is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation with no religious affiliations.

For over 70 years, we have been supporting children, adults, families and communities.

As a federation of Relationships Australia organisations in each state and territory, we have over 118 service locations across the country, with our National Office based in Canberra.

We provide a broad range of services including counselling, family dispute resolution and mediation, family violence prevention, support and recovery services, and mental health services.

Our services are for all members of the community, regardless of religious belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background or economic circumstances.

Relationships Australia receives funding from the Commonwealth Government, as well as state and territory governments, and other sources.

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Next steps

For more information on our services and how they can support you, or to find your nearest centre:

Call 1300 364 277

Visit www.relationships.org.au