



New Parents: Tips to Help You Cope

Nothing can be compared to the feelings of outright joy and love that fill your heart when you first see your new child. But once you bring the baby home from the hospital, reality sinks in. Suddenly you're responsible for a new being who depends on you for everything, but whom you don't entirely understand.

- ✓ **How do you cope with these new demands?**
- ✓ **How do you make sense of your emotions?**
- ✓ **How do you know if you need help?**

Understand the Transition to Parenthood

The postpartum months are a time of tremendous emotional transition. Along with the joy you feel as you watch your infant's changing facial expressions, you may feel exhausted, frightened, angry and depressed. It's also common for new parents to feel exhausted by their awesome responsibilities and resent their loss of freedom. It's not unusual to worry about your baby's development or feel awkward about changing diapers. Remember that you're forging new identities as parents. Your feelings are common and are nothing to hide from yourself or your spouse.

Nurture Your Baby

By the time you arrive home with your child, you have probably discovered that baby care is not an inborn natural instinct. Each child differs in temperament, energy and sensitivity and will require different types of attention. There are many baby care manuals available to offer helpful tips for dealing with infants.

Nurture Yourself

Happy, healthy babies can be the products of happy, healthy parents. New parents—and new mothers especially—should not underestimate their own needs for tender loving care.

- ✓ **Mothers can expect to be tired and sore for several weeks and should get as much rest as possible.**
- ✓ **Eat and exercise sensibly.**
- ✓ **When you can afford it, use conveniences, such as diaper services and cleaning services, to make life easier.**
- ✓ **Delegate chores to others, or just let some tasks slide.**
- ✓ **Ask for help from friends and relatives before your baby is born so you will have a prearranged support network.**

Nurture Yourself as a Couple

You and your spouse may now have little privacy and scarce energy when you do have time alone.

- ✓ **Tell your spouse about your feelings and needs at this time.**
- ✓ **If you're exhausted, ask your spouse for more help.**
- ✓ **Enjoy the pleasure of simple cuddling with your spouse.**
- ✓ **Use baby sitters and treat yourselves to dates on a regular basis. Although it may be hard to leave your baby, you'll be happier, healthier parents if you do.**

Build Relationships With Others

Reassurance and practical help from other adults can help you adjust to parenthood.

- ✓ **If friends and relatives are unavailable, develop your own support network.**
- ✓ **Introduce yourself to other parents in your neighborhood.**
- ✓ **Ask couples from your childbirth class if they'd like to form a parents' group.**
- ✓ **Community centers, hospitals and houses of worship frequently sponsor support groups for parents.**

Above all, try to keep a sense of humor and perspective during this trying but exhilarating time of adjustment. Remember that this is probably the most chaotic time in your life, but it won't last forever. Babies have a way of turning into toddlers in no time.