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So you're a new Dad!

Congratulations and welcome to the club – you've just joined 20% of other Australian Dads. Perhaps, you've been feeling pretty excited about being a father and plan to be very involved in your baby's life.

Get Involved

- Contact your other 'father' friends and relatives and talk to them about the challenges as well as the joys
- Speak to your employer about types of leave - you may be eligible for parental leave pay or Dad and Partner pay, if you and your partner alternate work roles
- Identify then manage the extra home duties (i.e., book groceries online, allocate tasks)
- Get involved in the day-to-day caring tasks like bathing your baby
- You may have missed out on the psychoeducation your partner got so catch up now by checking online resources for fathers (for example: beyondblue.org.au, mensline.org.au, panda.org.au).

Get to Know your baby

- Welcome and get to know your baby. Your baby is 'wired for connection'. Work on what the attachment literature calls 'being with' i.e. being able to be present and follow, not direct interaction with your baby
- You can develop your attachment (and your baby's brain) in the following ways: spend time directly making sense of all your baby's body language (i.e. all his/her sounds and movements). Speak 'baby-language' by matching your baby's verbal and non-verbal responses to you

- Make sure you enjoy some interactions and show this pleasure to your baby who will respond early on to playfulness
- You may notice that you and your partner handle your baby differently. Generally your baby will respond well to the differences, learning to feel safe and secure when you respond appropriately to his/her 'cues'.

Why Baby Cries

- Most babies will cry 'for no reason' for up to 3 hours in 24, there is also a period of 'purple crying' from 6 weeks to about 3-4 months when a baby may cry much longer for no apparent reason. It is especially valuable for parents' well-being to share the comforting of a crying baby
- If your baby is unsettled for a prolonged period call on friends or family for help. Because when parents become totally exhausted they may handle the baby more roughly than intended or shake the baby out of sheer frustration. This could cause result in severe brain injury or even death
- Welcome to extremes of emotions. You are living an intense ride: the birth (awe vs terror) then encounters with overwhelming changes combined with sleep deprivation

Tip: Take time out to reflect on what has just happened to you, and know that all the 'nurture shock' and 'adjustment stress' you feel is absolutely normal. Don't bottle up your feelings, be open and ask for help beyond your partner.

Tips for interacting with your baby as they grow:

- Parents can teach babies about physical and emotional self-regulation
- Maintain eye contact while holding your baby
- Watch for and verbalise signs of pleasure which describe the play (your baby can read your intention that this is a pleasurable activity)
- Show your baby the outside world, the local shops, the neighbours, your extended family and friends.

Tips for improving your relationship with your partner:

- Ask your partner what you can do to help and ask your partner what they can do to help you. Make sure you make time when you are both calm, to talk
- Talk about your feelings, your fears, about practical arrangements (focus on sharing the problems rather than immediate solutions). Everything from values to the arrangements for each day
- Accepting that you will both feel exhausted and overwhelmed at times and that this is hard on both of you, helps with the essential mutual 'goodwill'. So does practising being affectionate with each other.

Tips for you:

- A healthy and happy father is a significant source of security for your partner and baby so 'do not use up your own oxygen'
- Adjust the way you meet your own needs and incorporate exercise and respite, make sure these breaks are regular and scheduled
- Free up time by 'splitting the second shift' (i.e you both have your 'day-job' but the evenings, nights and weekends can have a rotating 'duty' parent.)
- Organise help from extended family and friends, accept offers of baby minding and meals so you and your partner can spend time alone. This time spent reconnecting makes it easier to negotiate and compromise when you inevitably (given adjustment stress and lack of sleep) argue
- Re-establishing a sexual relationship may be challenging as your partner may long to have 'her body to herself' but there are many professionals who are able to help (begin with your local doctor).

Post Natal Depression

- If your energy levels and tiredness become exhaustion check in on your mood. Fathers as well as mothers get post natal depression, for example intense feelings of sadness, frustration, (even joy), fear and guilt, feeling overwhelmed at the change. Again there is available and affordable professional help to be found by approaching your local doctor.

Tresillian Day and Residential Services support families experiencing a range of early parenting challenges including:

- Sleep and settling difficulties
- Adjustment to parenthood
 - Breastfeeding
 - Infant nutrition
 - Toddler behaviour
 - Multiple babies
- Emotional and psychological health & wellbeing
 - Postnatal depression and anxiety

For Parenting Support or to Self Refer to a Tresillian Service call:

Tresillian Parent's Help Line
1300 272 736

Follow Tresillian on Social Media:



For useful parenting tips visit

tresillian.org.au

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