

## HOW TO MANAGE THE STRESS OF BECOMING A NEW DAD



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Becoming a dad is a life-changing event, but it's also a challenging one too. As you adjust to your new life, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Newborns require round-the-clock attention, sleep deprivation can hit you hard, as you juggle work and family commitments, it's therefore not surprising that research shows that up to 1 in 10 new dads will experience perinatal depression and anxiety.

But you can take action to ease the pressure and make the early stages of fatherhood less stressful. Use these tips to cope with the changes and make your family life more fulfilling.

### 1. BUILD YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

They say it takes a village to raise a child for a reason – you don't have to go it alone. Think about who can you call on to actually get some help?

Seek out family and friends who can offer practical support and encouragement. Talk to dads at work about how they coped with the juggling act of becoming a dad and maintaining work demands.

What you and your family needs changes rapidly in the first year. Keep communication lines open for support.

### 2. PRIORITISE SOME 'ME-TIME'

Before children, your personal form of stress-release may have been exercise or catching up with your mates for a drink. As a dad, those opportunities are suddenly limited. Time becomes such a precious commodity.

Parenthood involves a lot of sacrifice and compromise as you care for your family, so make time for yourself if you can. It will make life a whole lot easier and enjoyable and even have the benefit of feeling more engaged with your family after doing so.

### 3. SET YOUR BOUNDARIES

Managing the competing demands of work and family can often feel like mission impossible. Trying to stay hyper-vigilant on every front is a recipe for

burnout. Setting boundaries for yourself is a good start.

Consider letting your team at work know that you won't be checking email after, say, 6pm. Similarly, talk to your partner and say: 'When I'm at work, if it's urgent call me twice. If it's not urgent, just send me a text and I'll respond to it as soon as I can', setting these sorts of boundaries can help manage stress.

### 4. MAINTAIN YOUR CONNECTION

The arrival of a baby changes the dynamic of your relationship overnight. As a new dad, it's common to feel somewhat replaced in your partner's affections. Not only is she totally exhausted, but all her remaining energy is devoted to your child. Transitioning into parenthood is difficult. Be kind with yourself and with your partner.

In those early months after childbirth, couples may find it more difficult to spend quality time together and have less opportunities or desire for intimacy. Be creative together and find other ways to connect even if it's a half hour a week catching up with each other at a regular time and place or holding hands whilst you watch TV together.

### 5. PLAY THE LONG GAME

In those early weeks, dads as well as mums, often worry if they don't feel an overwhelming sense of love and attachment for their new baby. Connections to any new person take time, so allow your attachment to develop and try not to worry about it too much. It will happen. Often dads return to work soon after their child is born, so they don't get the same daily exposure to the baby that builds up the bond. Regular interaction, cuddles and play will soon foster a deeper connection with your baby. 🌸

