

TIPS FOR MANAGING THE TRANSITION INTO PARENTHOOD



FACT SHEET_TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD 03.05.21

Education and support about perinatal depression and anxiety is at the heart of what we do at Gidget Foundation Australia. The transition to parenthood is one of the most important times in anyone's life and we are often told it should be the happiest, however, we know that 1 in 5 mums and 1 in 10 dads will experience some form of perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA). It is a common, temporary and treatable medical condition. This journey into parenthood is often a mixed experience with intense joys as well as lows, fears and times when the juggle between family and work can be very difficult.

It doesn't matter how many books you have read, or how hard you have tried to prepare yourself, we are all unprepared for what a baby brings into our lives. Life changes in so many ways as do our relationships with those around us. It is normal to feel overwhelmed and exhausted at times, especially in the first few months. Some increase in anxiety is also normal as you adjust to all the parenting demands and recover from the birth and feel so responsible for another human being. Even if you have the best support networks around you, you can still feel quite lonely at times too.

So much energy goes into looking after the baby that often our own individual needs are put on hold. There is little time to recharge or put some self-care strategies in place. We are trying to do the best we can as new parents and there is so much pressure to do it all so well. Pressures can come from others or within ourselves. At Gidget Foundation Australia we believe there is no perfect parent. We encourage you to look after yourself and reach out if you don't feel yourself for two weeks or more, after giving yourself a while to settle into your new world as parents.

Start talking to someone who will listen and help you seek further support if you need.

There are some evidence based ways listed below to lift mood and decrease anxiety. Try some out and see what feels right for you:

- Try to stay connected to people in whatever way you can

- Practice some regular breathing exercises
- Enjoy mindfulness activities such as using the CALM app, walking in nature or at the beach, or gazing at your baby or children and watching them play
- Listen to your favourite music or sing (singing activates the vagus nerve and can lessen anxiety)
- Keep active, doing whatever you enjoy (this reduces stress hormone build up)
- Try to eat a reasonably balanced diet most of the time
- Look at your bedtime rituals. Are they working for you? Can you limit screen time before bed, use low lighting, implement regular bedtimes, or just rest when you can
- Limit social media as it's not always realistic or helpful
- Try taking the pressure off and keep life as simple as possible
- Practice regular gratitude towards yourself and others
- Take some time out for self-care (this helps to build resilience and boosts feel good hormones)
- Talk to your children, partner, trusted friends and loved ones
- Reach out for help and support
- Contact a professional to discuss any emotional wellbeing issues if your anxious or depressed feelings don't settle with some of the above tips 🌸

SUPPORT OPTIONS

PANDA National Helpline: 1300 726 306

Gidget Foundation Australia: 1300 851 758

Lifeline: 13 11 14

