

fact sheet

TIPS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY AND STRESS FOR NEW AND EXPECTANT PARENTS



Anxiety and Stress new parents 11.11.21

Everyone is vulnerable when a baby is coming along – first time parents, those who've journeyed down this path before, parents from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds as well as non-biological parents and other carers such as foster/adopted parents. Mental illness does not discriminate. There is a lot to adjust to in the transition to parenthood.

An increase in anxiety is normal in the transition to parenthood. Stressors can also add up as you manage all the inherent changes. When this occurs we can experience a range of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations that might be uncomfortable at times.

Here are some evidence-based ways you can help yourself to feel better:

- Stay connected to people in whatever way you can. We all need our 'tribe'
 - Refer to reputable sources of information, and limit the amount of time you spend on unhelpful social media sites
 - Monitor your exposure to social media as it can erode confidence and show an unrealistic view of parenthood
 - Practice some regular breathing exercises
 - Enjoy some 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 some 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
- Be conscious of your intake of caffeine after midday
 - Continue your normal activities as much as possible
 - Reduce unnecessary stresses in your life, and try to simplify things around you
 - Do something for others, kindness is beneficial to yourself and the recipient
 - Practice regular gratitude towards yourself and others
 - Take some time out for self-care (this helps to build resilience and feel good hormones) practice self-compassion, this is not a time to be hard on yourself. It takes time to learn the parenting thing!
 - Have some fun with your children, partner or friends
 - Reach out for help and support
 - Contact a professional to discuss any emotional wellbeing issues if your anxiety and stress levels 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



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Gidget Foundation Australia exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care.