

KEEPING LOVE ALIVE IN YOUR MARRIAGE AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN

Congratulations on your new baby! It is so wonderful having a new tiny family member!

Yet, there will be challenges and changes, too. Perhaps you already noticed some during pregnancy. Financial worries, mood swings and questions about whether or not you will know what to do. These are all normal.

The following will help you enjoy your baby and keep your couple love alive.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR YOUR BABY'S FIRST YEAR

HINTS: The First Three Months

In the beginning, life will be crazy! So many changes, so little sleep. Here are some suggestions:

- ✦ Be patient with yourself, your spouse and your baby. You are all learning.
- ✦ Make a special effort to be kind and polite to each other. Stress and lack of sleep can make us a little grumpy.
- ✦ Seek the support of family and friends to ease the stress.
- ✦ Because your baby is so new and exciting and needs both of you so much, most of your waking moments will probably be focused on your baby. Try to find at least ten minutes each day for just the two of you. Talk about how you feel and listen to each other.
- ✦ Most couples go through a temporary disruption in their sex life. But you can still show your husband or wife you love them in many ways.

HINTS: Three to Six Months

By three months you will probably find yourself getting into a routine. Now is the time to look at what jobs each of you are doing and see if it is what both of you want. Here are some things to consider:

- ✦ If baby has been sleeping in the same room with you, now is a good time to talk about how you each feel about it. If you cannot agree, talk to your doctor or a counselor.

- ✦ Having a baby is wonderful. It makes you a family. However, it is not necessary for you to give your baby all your time and attention. It is just as important to give your sweetheart time and attention, too.
- ✦ Talk about the new jobs you now have. How can each of you help? Sharing childcare and chores will probably make each of you feel closer to your baby and closer to each other – as a team.

HINTS: Six Months to a Year

- ✦ Your baby will soon be crawling, walking and even talking! Now is a good time to discuss rules and limits.
- ✦ Encourage a reasonable bedtime for baby so you have couple time every day.
- ✦ Talk about what your parents' rules were when you were growing up. How were your families different? See if you can come to an agreement about how you will raise your child that includes the best ideas from both families.
- ✦ There are many helpful hints for raising children. Read and talk about them. Are there any you would both like to try?
- ✦ Often one parent is a little stricter and the other more nurturing. See if you can figure out which role each of you plays and talk about how important each role is.
- ✦ If you haven't already – find a good babysitter and go out on a date at *least* once a month. Family and friends may help and it does not have to cost any money.

SOME GENERAL HINTS

- ✦ Forget Super Mom or Super Dad. You'll be exhausted and crazy. No one's perfect. Just enjoy your baby!
- ✦ To decrease the added financial burden, borrow necessary equipment and avoid fancy toys.
- ✦ Avoid mistakes of centering your life on the baby or on work. Keep connected as a couple and make sure both of you are involved with your baby. (Example: Mom can nurse, Dad can burp.)
- ✦ Trust your instincts. Seek advice, but you two know your baby best.
- ✦ Feeling overwhelmed and exhausted are normal and *temporary*. Do what you can and let the rest go.

Always remember that special person you loved first: Your marriage partner.

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT YOU LIVE

Children learn about...

Love and marriage from how you treat each other.

What Moms and Dads, Husbands and Wives are like, from watching you.

What and who is important, by how much time you spend with them.

Security, when they see your marriage strong and each of you loving each other.

One of the greatest gifts you can give to your children is a strong, healthy marriage.

- Published by the Health Marriage Coalition of Central New York
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