



## Parenting Today

Learning how to care for and nurture your baby to become an emotionally strong and capable adult takes commitment, effort, support and some humour. To bring out the best in your child and family, we recommend a parenting approach known as 'responsive parenting'. This involves tuning in to your baby's social, emotional and physical needs. You are being a responsive parent when you act promptly and match your actions to what your baby is trying to communicate to you.

### What to Expect

- Whether you are parenting in a male-female couple, same sex couple or single parent family, there are challenges common to all families.
- Each parent brings their own experiences, values and beliefs about family life and parenting.
- It takes time to become confident in parenting.
- The early relationship you form with your baby sets them up for life in terms of brain development and future relationship skills.

### Challenges

- Experiencing challenges in family life and parenting is common. Challenges include:
  - Financial pressures or adjustments.
  - Isolation.
  - Low parenting confidence.
  - Poor sleep.
  - Communication and relationship breakdown between parents.
  - 'Too high' expectations of yourself, baby or partner.

### Parenting Tips

- Learn to read your baby's verbal and non-verbal cues to respond appropriately to their needs.
- Occasionally you will misread your baby's cues, this is normal.
- Discover what kind of family you want to be by defining your goals, beliefs and values.
- Develop family traditions, share responsibilities, and allow for moments of fun.
- Be open to advice but remember every family is unique, what works for one doesn't always work for another.
- Parenting is about trying your best, not perfection.
- Healthy eating, sunshine, fresh air, time with friends and relaxing is good for everyone.
- Maintain friendships while making new social connections through parenting groups and supports.
- You are starting a new parenting partnership with your partner, so you'll need to negotiate how you're going to parent together as a team.
- Respectful and clear communication is key for couples (remember, you are both learning to manage the changes in your life).
- Tell your partner how you are feeling, listen to your partner. It's important to share how you're both feeling.
- Accept help or ask for support when needed.

### Safety

Seek help if:

- You are finding it hard to understand your baby's cues.
- You aren't coping with parenting or there is ongoing conflict as you try to co-parent.
- You are finding it difficult to resolve common parenting challenges.

**with you  
every step  
of the way**

**If you have a parenting question call Karitane Careline: 1300 227 464**



## Mum and Dad Wellbeing

Parenting can be one of the best and also one of the most challenging experiences of your life. Some challenges are common to both parents, but some can be felt differently depending on whether you are mum or dad. Harmony in the home and the quality of your relationship with your baby and partner is important to the health and wellbeing of the whole family.

### Mum Challenges

- The expectation to be the perfect mum/super mum.
- It is normal to feel a loss of who you 'used' to be. Being 'mum' can feel different to your identity which could have been attached to your career or independence.
- Taking leave from your career when you have a baby is a big decision. It is common to feel conflicted about this.
- While things are changing, it is still largely women who are at home looking after the baby and it can feel like there is an expectation to be doing it all.
- Around 1 in 5 mums experience anxiety and/or depression.

### Dad Challenges

- Many dads struggle with how to be a role model when they themselves may not have a role model to follow. Times have changed and so has the role of dads. This is a good thing, but it is uncharted territory for many.
- Some dads think their partners are better at baby duties, but largely this is because they have more opportunity to practise these skills.
- Struggling to get the balance between career and family is common. Most men only get/take two weeks of paid paternity leave. The expectation is to adapt very fast.
- Sometimes it feels like your relationship is coming last and caring for your baby takes over everything.
- Around 1 in 10 dads experience anxiety and/or depression.

### Tips for Mum

- Adjusting to parenting takes time, even for mums. It is normal not to know exactly what your baby needs all of the time.
- Being a perfect mum is an unrealistic expectation. Don't believe everything you see on social media. Every mum and every family faces challenges.
- Identify what was important to you before your baby arrived and find a way to include that in your life.
- Looking after yourself is important. When you care for yourself you are better able to care for others.
- Discuss your plans for return to work with your partner and employer. It's Ok if you want to return to work, but it's also Ok if you change your mind, plans can change.
- Accept help from others, especially your partner. Accept they might do things a bit differently and that's Ok.
- Be specific about what you need from your partner. Respectful communication is important.
- Seeking help early is important and forms part of managing problems successfully.

### Tips for Dad

- Learning any new skill takes time, you don't have to be perfect just give it a go.
- Get involved with your baby's routine. Be a team with your partner and embrace that each of you will handle your baby differently.
- Times are changing, so choose parental leave that is right for your family. More dads are taking extended leave to be the dad they want to be. Be brave, even if you are the first in your workplace.
- Take time to connect every day and spend time with your baby. Never underestimate the power of a smile and a cuddle.
- Check in with your partner. Be specific and ask questions about what is going to be helpful.
- Quality time as a couple is important to stay connected. Discuss what quality time means to both of you. Don't assume a romantic dinner is the magic fix.
- Looking after yourself is important. When you're happier you're better able to support your partner and your baby. Look out for Dads groups in your area.

### Safety

- Getting support that you or a family member needs is a sign of great strength. Support networks exist as a way to promote the health and wellbeing of the entire family.

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