

# Essentials for New Dads

by Major Dad Official

**Congratulations, Dad! You just found out your partner is going to have a baby.**

So, what does this really mean to you? Well, after fathering five children, I'll tell you a small portion of what you might consider and possibly focus on. Performing these duties and tasks prepares your new family for long-term success and helps mom recover faster.

## Psychological Factors

A major psychological change occurs when a woman becomes a mother. There's a seismic shift in priorities, and her primary focus is now the baby, not you, not anymore. That's a tough one to come to terms with, but it is biological and necessary for the infant's health and wellbeing.

Your brain will also be affected by the infant cries of your biological children. This may affect you differently than hearing another person's baby cry. Keep your cool and help Mom to remain relaxed and calm. If the baby's primary needs are met, the baby will regulate off of you and mom and will become calmer, too. If all else fails, wear earplugs during the loud moments to keep your cool.

## Physical Factors

You, as a supportive partner and father, have a few priorities after childbirth:

- **Get mom's nervous system out of 'Fight or Flight' mode and into 'Rest and Digest'** for several important reasons (e.g., balancing hormones, sleeping better, faster physical recovery, better moods, more receptive after recovery, etc.).
- **Let mom sleep as much as possible, especially if she is nursing.** Sleep will be her priority after nursing baby. The less mom has to do the more she and baby can rest and trust me, they both need it.
- **Do things around the house with a good attitude.** What needs to be done should be done by anyone who can do it, even if it means hiring help. Mom needs to rest. If she is doing housework, shopping, and cooking dinner, she is not resting and not recovering optimally.
- **Take on some baby tasks.** Taking your baby for walks is a great way to bond and allow mom time to rest or shower. If mom is nursing, do a night-time diaper change. Talk to and snuggle your baby while making eye contact. Babies need a lot of gentle physical touch.

**Note:** The mother's placental wound is dinner-plate-sized. In the first six weeks of recovery, the body works on repairing this wound and restoring the blood supply that was lost during childbirth (assuming no complications with infection, bleeding, stitches, etc.).

Additionally, if the mom had a C-Section or other complication, initial recovery can last even longer or more demanding. Complete recovery takes a year or more, depending on the environment the mother has for recovery, including being in a state of rest-and-digest, eating foods tailored to postpartum nutrient repletion needs, a peaceful and loving environment that is supportive, and an understanding partner that takes charge for the family's wellbeing.

## Social Factors

It is your duty to 'Keep the Bond and Boundaries.' This is a simple task when you keep Mom and baby's well-being at the forefront of all decisions. Remember, mommy regulates the baby via her nervous system, and if Mom is stressed, it directly affects the baby's stress level. These boundaries also include:

- **Initial access to the baby** - Limit the number of guests who want to interact with the baby in the first week (due to microbiome seeding and immediate family member bonding).
- **Family bonding** - Later, form familial bonds while considering time with grandparents and family members from both sides of the family. It is natural for a mother to reach out to her own family. It is your job to ensure that your infant has time with your side of the family by initiating fun family interactions. An imbalance where one grandparent has more visitation can take away from the other grandparents' time to bond with the family.

## What To Learn

- **Temperament** - Do yourself a favor and learn about children's temperaments. Your child will have one of the 10 major types, and it's helpful to know how to interact effectively with them. A one-size approach does not fit all. I would have loved to have had this information with my firstborn. We have a podcast with Dr. Sam Goldstein that discusses temperament. Access this information and other sessions with Dr. Goldstein on our podcast page.

## What To Learn (cont.)

- **Postpartum Mood Disorders** - Become familiar with the signs of a postpartum mood disorder. Most women experience at least some form of it, whether it is baby blues (mild), depression, or literal psychosis. It is a function of multiple things (e.g., role changes, hormonal shifts, inadequate recovery, trauma, fight-or-flight, poor nutrition, stressful relationships, the death of being a child herself, etc.). Mom may not recognize the symptoms herself. It is important to find a way to communicate together peacefully early on (prior to conception, ideally, as you work on building a solid relationship).
- **Developmental Milestones** - Read up on the typical developmental milestones by age of your baby. This way, you will know what to expect and how to handle it.

## Personal Development

Finally, it's time to work on yourself.

- **Patience** - Patience is one overarching skill you must develop as a parent.
- **Triggers** - You'll have many opportunities to learn about your triggers during the early years of parenting. And here's some golden guidance;

**DO THIS:** When you are triggered and emotionally charged (angry), your first step is to take a physical step backward, then count to 10. It takes 10 seconds for the executive function to reboot and go online after an emotional episode. You're welcome.

We offer a 'Trigger Processing Template' in our member's area that allows you to deconstruct your trigger and determine its underlying cause. After the exercise, you will be clear on the source of the trigger, understand one of your fundamental values, and how to communicate your values in a positive message, which my wife likes to call a "Positive Value Statement."

**PARTING TIPS:** Learn to calm a crying baby with 'The Hamilton Hold,' the football hold, and the booty pat.

## Final Thoughts

In summary, welcome to the tip of the fatherhood iceberg! Check out our other sections and the member's area for more detailed information on recognizing signs of postpartum mood disorders, recovery practices, infant milestones, and more. You can also schedule a 1:1 with me and/or my wife (the Editor). Ask us any parenting questions. We've got you covered!

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