

Six Secrets for the First Six Months with Your New Baby



Photo Credit: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/naturesdawn/5797312235/>

By Ryland Shaffery

Many people look forward to becoming parents. There are a lot of joys involved with having a child, but if it's your first baby, you might need some pointers.

Bringing home a new baby can be scary. You might think that you're adequately prepared, but nothing truly prepares you for the first few months. When surprises pop up, it can leave you totally flustered.

The world as you know it gets turned upside down. Schedules change. Your house becomes messier. You learn something new everyday from your baby.

You dote on your new baby, but you are also filled with anxiety and fear that you might do something wrong.

Don't let this fear cloud the first memories that you have with your newborn child. Rather, it's important to take everything in stride.

There is no sure-fire way to raise a new baby. Often, it's best to just go with the flow to avoid putting additional stress on yourself about whether you're doing something "right" or "wrong."

How can you prepare yourself? How can you ensure that you remain sane after the baby arrives? How can you keep the romance alive within your relationship? How can you maintain your relationships with friends and family members? How can you continue to take care of yourself when you're so focused on taking care of someone else?

Today we're going to discuss six tips that you should use for the first six months after you have a baby. These tips will help to simplify the process and to put your mind at ease as a new parent.

1. Gather and Sort Through Advice

Despite the fact that there is no perfect way to parent a child, there are some methods that tend to work better than others.

Why stumble around in the dark? There are so many people out there who have either had children or have worked with children, that your resources are endless.

Before you have the baby, read books about possible things that you should expect. There are thousands of these books. Many of them cater to the style of parenting that you might want to try.

There are also countless parenting magazines out there that are full of information.

While you are in the hospital, take advantage of the fact that you are surrounded by medical professionals. Ask them any and all questions that come to mind. Don't worry about sounding dumb. They'll understand that you simply want to be as prepared as possible.

Most people are happy to help. You can inquire about sleep patterns, breast-feeding, and more. A lot of hospitals even provide lactation consultations. It's easier to ask while you're still in the hospital and have these people at your disposal rather than after you're home alone with the baby.

That said, it's never too late to gather more information about your baby and how to deal with questions or struggles.

You can look up information online as well. Be selective in the information that you choose. Not all of it is top notch. Everyone has an opinion. It's up to you to sift through information, and go with what you feel is best. You can also ask for multiple opinions on the same topic, and choose from there.

Through research, you'll find that certain sources are more credible than others, and you'll know where to search for the answers to your questions in the future.

Ask your family and friends about their experiences with bringing home a new baby. Each family has different results, and will have plenty of information to share.

Do they have any funny stories? What were the main struggles that they dealt with? What positive solutions did they find? Did they discover any useful tricks along the way? Were there things that definitely did not work? What are some tools that they swear by?

You never know what bits of information will end up being helpful! Perhaps you'll remember one little thing that someone mentioned, and it will end up being incredibly useful for you.

Don't be embarrassed that you don't know everything. Most people think they're prepared only to find out that they're actually not.

That's the funny thing about having a baby: no matter how much you research do and how much you prepare, there will always be curve balls thrown at you.

Someday, you will be the one passing on useful information and funny stories! After you survive your first child, any future children will be much easier! You'll be a master, and will be ready for anything that your next child tosses your way.

2. Gladly Accept Any and All Help That Is Offered

People understand that having a baby is a huge, life-altering event. They know that it takes time for the mommy to get back on her feet, and for both parents to adapt to the learning curve after bringing the new baby home.

So, when people offer you a helping hand, accept it! Don't worry about seeming like a mess or as if you can't handle everything. Everyone knows that having a baby temporarily turns your life upside down—sometimes even for years!

When you have a baby, household chores, grocery shopping, and even personal hygiene can fall by the wayside. The longer these things build up, the more stressed out you will become. It can be frustrating, especially if you're also sleep-deprived. There may be times in which you feel like you're failing as a parent.

You're not a superhuman. You're one person. There are only so many hours in the day, and there are only so many hours when your baby is sleeping and you finally have time to yourself. For the first few months, you will rarely have any free time. As a new parent, you must acknowledge this fact and find a way to accept it.

So, when your mother offers to babysit for a few hours, let her! There are a ton of things that you can do with this extra time. You can catch up on sleep. You can get a haircut. Or, you can finally run some much needed errands.

When your best friend wants to cook dinner for your family or is willing to pick up food and bring it to your home, thank her and take the food. Cooking takes time out of your day, especially if it's healthy cooking. When you have a new baby in your arms, it is exceptionally difficult to be a master chef. If someone else wants to do it for you, that's fantastic!

If your mother-in-law wants to come over and do the laundry and the dishes, allow her do so. It will take a huge load off your mind. It can be scary watching everything pile up. But as a new parent, you shouldn't be stressing over housework. You should be focusing on the baby.

When your partner offers to give you a backrub or says that he or she will watch the baby while you take a shower, take it! You deserve it.

You're not being selfish and you're not accepting charity. There's nothing wrong with needing assistance. There's also nothing wrong with asking for help from time to time.

It doesn't show weakness, and it doesn't mean that you're failing as a new parent. It means that you're human, and that people like you enough to want to help you out when they can. Be grateful.

If you try to do every little thing on your own while taking care of the new baby, you'll go insane. You'll be exhausted and stressed out. This energy isn't good for you, the baby, or your family.

Over time, you and your baby will get to know each other. You'll discover little tricks that work, and you'll be able to do most of the things that you used to do. You and your partner will figure out successful systems for housework, shopping, showering, and more.

Life will become more normal again. You'll find a routine. Don't add more stress to your day by worrying about being dependent on other people for a while. Remember, people don't generally offer to do things that they don't want to do. If someone offers, it's because they care about you.

As they say, "It takes a village to raise a child." Welcome that village with open arms!

3. Figure Out a Plan Early

It's always best to have a plan. Some things can be fun when they're spontaneous, but bringing home a baby is not one of those things.

Before you have the baby, sit down with your partner and work out arrangements. As with anything, communication is key.

For example, you can devise a sleep schedule. Pick the days that you or your partner will get up during the night when the baby cries.

This way you will be less irritated when your partner doesn't always offer to go tend to the baby because you will know whose turn it is. You will also get a chance to catch up on a little bit on sleep. This is critical for your health and sanity. You won't get a ton of sleep the first year, so take advantage of it whenever you can.

You can plan out if one or both of you will need to take off extra time from work to ease the adjustment. This will give both of you time to change your schedules. This makes it easier than having to do it suddenly. Your boss will be more willing to give you time off if he or she knows about it in advance.

Who is in charge of doing the household chores? Will you handle different tasks? Will you take turns? Will you hire a maid? Who will cook dinner each day? What do you do when one or both of you needs to go out of town for some reason?

All of these are acceptable questions, and it's best to discuss them beforehand so that neither party becomes resentful.

When will you have date nights? Will you go out every Friday or Saturday? Will you plan a date every other week? What will work best for you and help keep the romance alive?

It's important to still possess some semblance of a life after the baby is born. It might be scary to leave the baby for a few hours, but it will do wonders to help keep your relationship with your partner solid.

What are the rules about disagreements after the baby arrives? Can you agree to remain calm and talk things out civilly so as not to fight in front of the baby? Can you work through your problems in a loving manner so that the relationship doesn't suffer?

What about religion? Do you want the baby to be baptized? Will you raise the baby under a specific religion? Although it's early, it's also never too early to discuss schools. This way, there will be no major surprises down the road.

When you set a plan early, it helps smooth the path when the baby comes. There will be a ton of things that surprise you and that are completely out of your control. But if you have a plan, you create some stability, and will hopefully be better able to take things in stride.

Having a plan will help you to avoid unnecessary arguments with your significant other. It will establish that you are working together as a team.

The baby should bring your family together, not tear it apart. Building a strong communication system before the baby comes will help ensure that your communication remains solid after the baby arrives.

4. Soothe and Bond With Your New Baby

The world is a brand new place for your tiny baby. Imagine what it must be like to enter the world never having felt fabrics, heard certain sounds, or seen tall buildings (or tall people, for that matter)!

Babies cry a lot. That is how they express themselves. If your baby cries, check for the usual culprits: hunger, a dirty diaper, attention, a fever, etc.

Sometimes babies just need to cry. Don't beat yourself up if you can't figure out what's wrong. There are certain things that you can do to try to calm your baby.

First, take a second to acknowledge your emotional state. Are you calm? Are you panicked? Are you tense?

Your emotions can affect the baby. So, if you're not calm, try to get there. Take a few deep breaths, turn on some calming music, drink some tea, etc.

Babies respond well to warmth, so you can try swaddling your new baby. If you don't know how to properly swaddle your baby, you can seek help from a medical professional, or you can research via books or online. These resources can provide valuable information, such as the fact that you are only supposed to swaddle babies who are under the age of two months.

You can also rock your baby or cuddle. Babies also tend to enjoy skin-to-skin contact. Lay down and let the baby rest on your chest. This provides warmth, and allows you to bond.

Perhaps a warm bath will do the trick. Or, if you're changing the baby, use warm wet wipes instead of ones that are room temperature or cold. Chillier wipes can startle the baby.

Make sure that you know how to properly bathe your baby, and know how to test if the water is too warm.

You can hum or quietly sing. You can rock your baby from side to side. Or, if you have a hand available, babies often like it when you gently stroke them.

Unless something is really, truly wrong with your baby, such as a high temperature, try to remain calm.

Again, it's good to go with the flow. Every baby is different. Even though the tough times seem to last forever, you WILL get through them.

You are not a bad parent, and your baby will eventually stop crying and be fine.

The good news is that through trial and error, you will find something that works most of the time. From then on, you will know how to quickly comfort your baby.

5. Get Dad Involved

Give dad a chance to bond with the baby as well. This will give you a little time for yourself, and it will help reinforce the bond between the baby and its father.

Also, don't be too harsh with dad. Most guys have no clue what to do with a newborn baby. Dad might be hesitant at first. He might worry about hurting the baby. Watching your partner handle the baby might be scary or frustrating at first, but it's important for you to help him out. Remember, he doesn't necessarily have the same biological instincts that you do.

Do your best to be supportive and nurturing, rather than annoyed and judgmental of every little mistake. Give him some pointers.

The last thing you want to do is scare dad away from the baby. You want him to be involved. You also want dad to know that you're on the same team.

Some men feel replaced when the baby is born. The baby demands most of mom's attention, and their husbands feel shut out.

Refer back to #3 (Figure out a Plan Early). The baby will take over your life, but don't let it take over your relationship with your significant other.

You can also make dad feel more involved by asking him to handle specific chores. Even though he may not be able to breast-feed the baby, he can still be extremely helpful and loving.

Take turns getting up in the middle of the night to feed and cradle the baby back to sleep. This will help both of you keep your sanity and allow you each to get a better night's rest. When you are more rested, you will be less irritable and less likely to snap at one another.

Allow dad to bond with the baby in his own way. Again, try not to crack down too hard. It may take him a while to become comfortable with the baby, which means that it might also take him a while to figure out how what he and the baby like best.

Dad may not do things that way that you do, but that doesn't mean that he's wrong.

It's very important that dad and baby bond. Studies have shown that the father aids in the baby's brain development.

While babies generally hear mom's voice more often, they also need to hear dad's voice to help develop their brains. Fathers provide a new voice and vocabulary that the baby doesn't get to hear as frequently. Studies indicate that children who spend a good amount of quality time with their fathers are more intelligent.

Let dad have his time too. Trust him with the child you brought into the world together. It will only bring your family closer.

6. Maintain Your Life

Just because you have a baby doesn't mean that the world stops spinning. It also doesn't mean that your life is over. On the contrary, having a baby opens up exciting new doors for you.

Having a baby can be exhausting and terrifying, but don't let it bog you down. Remember, you once were your own person who did fun things, had friends, and enjoyed good laughs. The good news is that you can STILL be that person!

Once you have a baby, it's true that your life really isn't your own anymore. You have to focus on the baby, and put its needs before your own. However, this doesn't mean that you aren't allowed to take care of your own needs from time to time. You NEED "you" time.

After you have the baby, make sure that you take at least a little time for yourself each day.

Again, allow your friends, family members, and spouse to help you out now and then so that you can focus on yourself.

Enjoy a nice hot shower. Visit your favorite coffee place. Go for a walk outside. Watch TV. Go to the gym. Go shopping. Spend time with friends and family members. Listen to an audio book while you breast feed. Do something that you want to do.

When you're ready, go outside with the baby. You don't have to remain inside forever!

The key to going on adventures with your new baby is to be over-prepared. You never know what might happen.

Always take a diaper bag. They are lifesavers. They make venturing out with a baby both possible and more enjoyable. It's best to pack extra clothes for the baby, extra clothes for yourself, bottles, diapers, wipes, pacifiers, favorite toys, and anything else you might need.

Remember, it's better to pack it at home than to wish that you had brought it.

Don't dread taking your baby out in public. Again, babies cry. Yes, it's annoying, but people know that it's a part of life. If your baby cries, no one will assume that you're a horrible parent. They'll simply note that the baby's crying and move on.

Many people have children. They understand what you're going through. Don't freak yourself out or worry too much. Just enjoy being out of the house.

That said, it's best to start with simple places. Go to a place where you won't be embarrassed if your baby spits up on your shirt or screams its head off.

Sometimes you can even leave the baby home. Ask your partner to watch the baby so you can spend some time with friends. Hire a babysitter or ask a family member to watch the baby so that you can go out for an evening with your partner.

Don't feel bad about wanting to get out of the house. Don't feel bad for wanting to be the person you used to be. There's no shame in needing "you" time.

If you want a manicure, set it up so that you can go get one.

If you want to go to the gym, find a gym that has baby-sitting or daycare, and take your baby with you! Your baby can play while you sweat it out.

Doing things for yourself is critical for maintaining sanity. You don't want to become crabby, irritated, mean, resentful, or anxious because you never get out of the house anymore.

Plus, being inside all of the time can be claustrophobic. Get out, breathe in the fresh air, and enjoy yourself.

Lastly, hold onto your perspective. Having a child isn't a tragedy. It doesn't end your life, and unless you're a terrible person, you're probably not going to ruin your child's life either.

Millions of people have successfully given birth and raised children. Many have raised more than one at a time.

If they can forge through, you can too!

As they say, "Don't sweat the small stuff." It's also totally okay to laugh at situations. In fact, it's often better than crying or getting angry.

You might be at the end of your rope, but is it really going to help you to yell at your husband or your mother? The answer is most likely "no."

Instead, sometimes it's best just to laugh the stress off. You'll feel better in the long run, and you'll realize that you're human and everything is going to be okay.

Babies are little miracles. They definitely change your life, and in most cases, they change it for the better.

If having a baby were truly horrible, no one would willingly choose to do it.

Despite any rough patches or struggles, you will make it through. The first year will fly by, and you'll say, "Where did the time go?"

The first six months might be a total blur and your house might be covered in clothing, dust, and dirty dishes. But, once it's all cleaned up and your child is grown up, you'll look back and remember the amazing moments that you and your family shared.

You'll fondly think back to the first time that your baby smiled. You'll remember the first time that your baby began to crawl. You'll giggle at the sounds your baby has started to make, and you'll marvel at how your baby is developing a personality of his or her own.

Take a lot of photos. Make videos of your baby. You'll treasure these items for many years to come and will be glad that you took the time to compile them.

Keep a baby journal. This will serve two purposes. It will help you remember solutions that were successful and remind you to try them again. It will also allow you to look back and see what you were thinking during the first year and to read about the things that you experienced with your new baby.

Relax and know that you can do it. Everyone is different. Every baby is different. Some advice works. Some doesn't. Sometimes your baby will be happy. Other times, your baby will be inexplicably upset.

Babies are lessons in humility. Sometimes, you have to put down your guard and accept the fact that you are human, and that you can only do so much.

As long as you keep your sense of humor, work to keep your relationship with your significant other strong, and approach everything you do for your baby with love, you'll be fine.

Conclusion

When you have a baby, there is a lot to learn. You'll learn certain elements in advance. You'll learn the rest as you go along.

It's okay if everything isn't perfect the first time. Your baby may not immediately take to breastfeeding. Your baby may have funny sleep patterns. At first, your husband may not know how to hold the baby the right way.

There is a learning curve. Be patient, and work through everything as a family. Enjoy the fact that you get to spend this time together.

Although you'll likely be stressed from time to time, think about the benefits of having a child. You've created something. You've brought something new into the world, and you have the ability to shape this baby into a lovely human.

The first six months might be terrifying. The whole first year will be a blur. The next couple of years may or may not get easier. Soon you'll be facing the "terrible twos" and then the "even worse threes." You'll be learning the entire time.

Again, you can find hope in the fact that millions of other people have survived raising children (including your own parents).

You're likely to discover that it is the most rewarding experience of your life. Spend as much time as you can with your child and develop a close bond.

The early stages are critical for bonding and for development.

You will fare better if you are calm, prepared, and positive. Remember, everything you do can have an effect on the baby. Do your best and try to maintain positive energy.

If one day goes poorly, get some rest and know that tomorrow is another day. Before you know it, you'll have a small toddler running around who can talk and start potty training.

Treasure the first year, and do the best you can! Your baby will be thankful.

By employing the tips that we discussed today, you can help put yourself in a stronger position when you have your baby.

For more information, be sure to check out my newsletter. Thanks for reading!