

WHY NEW MOMS NEED MOTHERING

When you are at home nurturing your newborn during those first few weeks, you need someone nurturing you. In other words, you need to be mothered, too!

It's natural. In many cultures new mothers are surrounded by family members or other “women folk” who take care of cooking, cleaning and other domestic chores, giving the new mother much needed rest after delivery and time to bond with her infant. Today's new parents often live far from their extended families, and postpartum doulas sometimes fill this role. Don't let yourself become isolated during the first weeks and months after your baby is born, and don't try to do too much. Do say yes to offers of a meal, a load of laundry or a trip to the grocery store.

It's natural but it doesn't always come naturally. If you are a first-time mother you may find that the how-tos of mothering your newborn don't always come naturally or easily. A mentoring female – whether your mother, mother-in-law, sister or trusted friend – can help you gain confidence in your mothering skills with good listening, coaching, and modeling. And if you are having difficulties with breastfeeding a lactation consultant can be a godsend. Most hospitals and medical groups provide lactation education and consultation. There are also private practice lactation consultants. Look for an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

You need emotional support. If you are like most new moms, you will probably feel emotional or become tearful at times. While the emotional experience we call “baby blues” is both common and temporary, it can feel very uncomfortable and distressing. Emotional support is essential at these times. Reach out to a trusted, nurturing support person or a local support group in your community. If you are feeling isolated, if you are feeling chronically sad or depressed, or if you are having worrisome or disturbing feelings or thoughts, call your doctor or a mental health professional who is knowledgeable about postpartum adjustment issues.

You and your baby are becoming attached. Both physically and emotionally the experience of pregnancy, giving birth and bonding with your baby is profoundly intimate. As you and your baby become emotionally connected, you can identify with your baby's vulnerability and need for contact and comfort. This need is as basic as the need for food. Many women feel a deep longing for contact with their mothers when they are pregnant or after giving birth. Be understanding and compassionate with yourself if you feel as small and helpless as your baby at times, or if you find yourself yearning for maternal care and nurturing. There is an amazing connection between mothering your newborn and your own experience of being mothered.

Your baby benefits. When you have the assistance, mentoring and emotional support of at least one experienced mothering figure you are less vulnerable to the ordinary and sometimes extraordinary stresses of new motherhood, and your baby will find your arms a more soothing, peaceful place to be. That's good for your baby, good for your partner, and good for you.

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