

# **The Emotional Adjustment to Motherhood**

**Motherhood will have a profound impact on your life.**

**But this is true if this is your first baby or your second, third etc. All new babies lead to parents' experiencing a huge transition and I don't think we can really get that until it happens.**

**Here are a few things you have to contend with:**

- *Oh, my God, there is a baby here and I'm responsible for it!*
- A whole new role and identity without any formal training
  - The first few weeks are a 24/7 job – All I am is Mom!
    - The impact of sleep deprivation
  - Relief as it gets easier to manage the practicalities with time
- And baby's first smile (6-8 weeks), the joys, yes, the ups and downs!

## **What Can You Do To Have A Smoother Transition?**

**Finding Balance - a very important work in progress.**

- Find time for self.
- Find time for you and partner.
- Find time for you all to be together as a family.
- Spend quality time with your child – focus on one thing at a time to connect & be fully present.

**Allowing Yourself to Ask & Accept Support From Your Partner/Family/Friends is key**

- Have weekly/daily meetings so you can all work as a team.
- Schedule it – write it down on the calendar!
- Develop a support network, preferably ahead of time to bring meals, help with housework, run errands, pick up older children, babysit so you can have a break.

## **Become Aware of What You Need**

- Listen to thoughts: what are you telling yourself right now, is it unrealistic or negative, what could be a realistic or positive way of looking at it.
- Listen to emotions: acknowledge feeling, don't fight it, accept it e.g. "I feel irritable right now." "I am in a bad mood." "I feel resentful."
- Listen to your body: eat when hungry, rest when tired - HALT- Are you Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired?

## **Allow Yourself to Receive What You Need: You Matter**

- Look after yourself and you have the reserves to look after others.
- Ask yourself - What is keeping you from asking for what you need?
- What is keeping you from giving to yourself?
- Think back on your day. What would you have done differently if you had been taking care of your needs? What can you do differently tomorrow?
- Take breaks throughout the day - breathe
- Acknowledge how much you do – you deserve a break
- Be direct with your requests for help

## Things You Can Do To Nurture Yourself

Below is a list of self-help suggestions. Keep in mind that you may not feel able to do many of the things listed here all at once. The most important thing is to do what you are able, no more, no less. Take small steps, try not to be too hard on yourself and take one day at a time.

- Do not expect too much from yourself right now.
- Rest when your baby sleeps.
- Take short breaks from the baby.
- Go for a short walk.
- Eat well.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Avoid overdoing anything.
- Get out of the house.
- Set small goals for yourself.
- Avoid strict or rigid schedules.
- Screen phone calls.
- Set limits with your guests.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Delegate household duties.
- Let others know what they can do to help.
- Let your partner/family/friends know how you are feeling.
- Be very specific about what you need from your partner.
- Avoid people who make you feel bad.
- Set boundaries with people you can't avoid.
- Lose any expectations you have of yourself & others that can't possibly be fulfilled.
- Give yourself permission to have negative feelings.
- Trust your instincts.
- Expect some good days and some bad days.
- Prioritize what needs to be done and what can wait.
- Thank your partner/family/friends for helping you.
- Don't compare yourself to others.
- Do not blame yourself.
- Do the best you can. If it doesn't feel like enough, it's enough for now.
- Encourage your partner to also seek support from friends and outside activities.
- Confide in someone you trust.
- Remind yourself that all adjustment takes time.
- **Look after yourself then you will have the emotional & physical energy you need**
- **Don't feel guilty, it wastes energy.**