



Birth OF A Parent

From the Beginning Onward

Hi New Parents!

Feeling exhausted and overwhelmed? Here are:

FIVE WAYS TO BRING IN EASE

Keep in mind, you don't have to tackle these all at once. Think of them as pieces of a much bigger picture, like a jigsaw puzzle you might be putting together. Eventually the pieces will start to fit together.

1. SLEEP

Sleep is like gold. It always holds its value. One sleep cycle is about 90 minutes long. If your sleep gets disrupted at any time during one cycle, when you fall back asleep, you must start over at the beginning of the cycle.

This is why you don't feel rested even if you sleep in multiple shorter spurts through the night. (*Note: Yes, this is exactly how babies sleep and there's a word for it: **polyphasic**. Typical adult sleep is **monophasic**.)*

Tips: Strive for chunks of two to three sleep cycles. Try sleeping in shifts. One parent takes the first part of the night, the second can take the latter, or divide it in a way that makes sense for your family. And don't forget about **REST**. Slow down and be willing to take a break from all the "doing" and be open to resting during the day – even if that means just sitting for a few moments. Give yourself time to "be" – because you are a human *being*.

"Sleep provides overnight therapy. And what we've discovered is that sleep will take these difficult, painful experiences... And it will act almost like a nocturnal soothing balm. And it will just take the sharp edges off those emotional memories so that when you come back the next day, they don't feel as emotional anymore."

– Matthew Walker, Sleep Scientist and author of [Why We Sleep](#)

2. NUTRITION

As new parents, you're busy doing so much because babies are demanding and have multiple needs that must be met. *Right now*. But just as your baby needs to be fed to develop and grow, you also need nutrition – and hydration – to keep going as well.

Tips: Focus on protein because it's satiating. It will keep you feeling full longer. Stash things like protein bars and nuts in accessible places throughout the house, along with water bottles. Your nervous system works better when you get adequate hydration, and the nervous system plays a key role in helping you stay regulated and calm.

3. MOVEMENT

Human bodies are designed to move. Our brains appreciate when we move – the proof is in the brain's release of neurochemicals that make us feel (and sleep) better. Movement helps shift stress through our physical and emotional selves.

Tips: You don't need to run a marathon. Take a short walk around the block or up and down your driveway. Do some sweeping. Move your arms in circles. Play with the dog. Dance around the house.

4. SUPPORT

Becoming a new parent can at times feel very isolating. Getting out of the house and being social again can seem insurmountable. To temper this, you need social, practical and emotional support. Maybe it's a friend who lets you "vent" without interrupting. It could be a therapist or counselor you reach out to, a trusted family member, or maybe it's a neighbor who comes over to help wash some dishes while you take a break.

Tips: You are not alone. If you are feeling emotional or isolated, reach out. Some resources can include *Postpartum Support International* (Help Line: call or text 1-800-944-4773), or *Perinatal Support Washington* (1-888-404-7763). Both offer additional resources such as many types of support groups for parents. Check out your local community's mom and dad peer support groups. Join the stroller walking group you heard another mom talking about a while ago.

5. COMPASSION

This is one thing you can offer yourself at any stage of your parenting journey, but it is especially important now. Parenting is hard, even when we have plentiful moments of joy and love. Your baby didn't come with a manual, and it might feel like you're constantly trying different things that don't always succeed. You're just getting to know what your baby responds to – this is incredibly hard work! Within all of this, offering yourself compassion will help you to find greater balance and calm, grounding and yes, ease.

Tips: If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a self-compassion break. Make a cup of tea and sit down to enjoy it. Remember that you are engaged in a process that so many parents have struggled with across millennia. Sit quietly and feel into this. Then say out loud, "This is hard. I am doing something hard." As the visionary hero, James Holden, says upon arriving on an alien planet in the sci-fi series, *The Expanse*, "You just got here. There's no shame in easing into things."

Breathe in kindness to yourself, exhale pain, exhaustion and overwhelm. Press your feet down into the ground and feel how the Earth supports you. *Know that the more you practice offering yourself kindness and compassion, the more you can positively change your relationship to yourself.* This, in combination with everything already listed, will bring you greater ease.