

# Postpartum Prep Toolkit

## Your Guide to a Healthier Postpartum Transition



Being a new parent is tough and affects all parts of our lives, often in unexpected ways. Adjusting to life with a new baby is overwhelming with a lot of deep emotions, a lot of learning and a lot of change. Adjusting to parenthood is one of the biggest transitions in our lives. Asking for and accepting help can be a really hard thing to do, but is so important. We are not meant to go through parenthood alone. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness; it is an intelligent, compassionate thing to do for yourself and new family. Don't wait to ask for help.

### Postpartum Mental Health Facts

- 85% of people will experience emotional distress during pregnancy or the postpartum period
- 15-20% of new parents will experience a Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder (PMAD)
- PMADS are treatable and support is available

### Helpful Reminders

- It's okay and completely normal to experience a range of emotions
- Being a good parent involves not having all of the answers
- The days are long, but the newborn stage will pass
- You are doing the best that you can and that is enough

### Practicing Self-Compassion

- 1. Start by acknowledging the feeling:**
  - “Wow, this is hard” or “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (sensations) in \_\_\_\_\_ (location)”
- 2. Know that you are not alone:**
  - “Postpartum is tough for everyone” or “All people struggle”
- 3. Be kind to yourself:**
  - “May I be gentle with my words” or “May I start to accept myself” or “Everyday I am learning”

*“There’s no way to be a perfect mother and a million ways to be a good one.”*

-Jill Churchill

## The Importance of Sleep

- Sleep deprivation increases your chances of developing a perinatal mood or anxiety disorder
- Sleep deprivation can worsen symptoms that you may be experiencing
- You should aim to get chunks of at least 3 hours of sleep
- Split night duties with partner, friends, family, or raise money for a night nurse
- Sleep in a different room or with ear plugs where your sleep will not be interrupted



## Exercise or Moving Your Body

- Exercising can reduce your symptoms by 50% by increasing your serotonin neurotransmitters just the way medications work
- Talk to your doctor about exercise approval
- After approval, move your body in a way that makes you happy
- **Start small:** Day 1: walk to the mailbox; Day 3: walk to the neighbor's; Day 5: walk around the block
- **Aim for:** 20 minutes of moderate intensity, 3-5 times per week
- Rate mood before exercise and rate mood after exercise. *You are likely to notice an improvement in your mood.*

## Self-Care/Feed Your Soul:

- What do you find peace in? (Exercise, singing, music, art, reading, religion?)
- What is grounding for you?
- What did you do before having a baby?
- What did you enjoy as a child?

*\*Self-care helps improve mood, boosts confidence, and reduces, the negative effects of stress.*

### Things that feel good:

*Examples: Soft pajamas, warm cup of tea, pet cuddles*

### Things I need to do when stressed:

*Examples: Ask for hugs, journal, talk about my feelings, get quiet time, talk with friends, take a nap*

### My strengths (What would others say are your strengths?):

*Examples: I am sensitive, caring, and compassionate. I am skilled at: writing, cooking, dancing, etc.*

## Building Your Village

- Evolutionary Biologists have confirmed that humans evolved because villages worked together
- Life is not a solitary endeavor
- Not having a support system is a risk factor to developing postpartum depression and/or anxiety
- Find a mom's group to join:
  - [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com), Facebook, churches, Peanut App are good places to find support groups for moms

## Utilizing Your Village

### Who I can call....

To hold baby so I  
can shower:

To care for baby  
so I can sleep:

To make food:

To vent:

To run errands:

To make me  
laugh:

For advice:

Services:

To remind me of  
how awesome I am:

For professional  
help:



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