



It is hard to predict how much a baby can change a relationship but guaranteed it will in some way, shape or form. No-one is totally prepared for parenting and this seems to be the main reason for relationship dissatisfaction early on. The juggle between work and family can be very difficult. There is less quality couple time together and often intimacy has decreased. Some couples manage this transition with a few disagreements and for others it is a real struggle.

Men's roles have also changed so much over the years and we know that they too need extra support, like the mums at this time in their lives. Both new and expectant parents have extra stresses to manage as they adjust to parenthood and being aware of the possible change. Equally, we want to emphasise what has been working and keeping communication open with each other can help a lot.

Relationships are a work in progress and realistically take continual effort in one way or another to help them grow and be sustained. The extra stresses can place couples in a place of conflict that they may not have experienced before or flare up existing issues or even increase the risk of domestic violence.

When stress is ongoing the effects can impact negatively on our physical and mental health. We need to work on our relationships, discuss what isn't working so well and see if anything can be changed and emphasise what has been working well and celebrate that.

When we can manage conflict in a constructive way, we also model to our children how to deal with conflict. They learn from watching how we process emotion and manage our more intense feelings, even before they are verbal. So, for our own benefit, that of our partners as well as our children, it is worthwhile having some tips up your sleeve for managing relationships.

DADS / PARTNERS CAN:

- Be attentive, show initiative and take responsibility on the domestic front
- Take your baby/child to give your partner a break and gain confidence in parenting
- Be kind and supportive
- Listen and understand what is going on with your partner and try not to fix things quickly
- Initiate a catch up time and work out creative ways to feel close e.g. a foot or back rub

MUMS CAN:

- Understand that partners struggle too
- Check in with your partner, allow them some space when a disagreement occurs
- Acknowledge when your partner has been supportive or taken initiative
- Learn and respect we all have different communication styles
- Work together to create some couple time

Relationship therapist Gottman indicates in his research that those in successful relationships make five times as many positive statements as negative ones to each other.

You will discover new things about each other when becoming parents. Sharing what you notice can be very strengthening. For example, your partner's humour and how she survives on such little sleep, his way of managing nappy changes or playful way of interacting with your baby. Gottman refers to this as 'scanning the environment for things you can appreciate about your partner'.

Rather than seeing conflict as always being detrimental or negative, understand that conflict is an essential aspect of any relationship. It can give couples a time to re-connect, enhance trust and sort out problems. Conflict often occurs around differences in ideas, wishes and needs. →



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RELATIONSHIP TIPS



Relationship Tips 5.12.21

But what happens afterwards, the REPAIR and how that is done is most important.

There are also basic differences between men and women. In conflict situations, research shows men need space in an attempt to regulate their physiological reaction to stress. They look up, move around and need space to re-group. Women, however, are able to stay in the conflict space longer, and therefore stay in the situation, hoping to reach resolution. By understanding this inherent difference, men may be more inclined to give their female partner more time to debrief and simply listen, without 'fixing'. It might reassure women that giving her

male partner space will help him process and return to resolve.

We hope that you have found some of these relationship tips helpful and if you need extra individual support during these times, please reach out to us at Gidget Foundation Australia. 🌸

Other helpful resources:

Relationships Australia:

<https://relationships.org.au/>

Mensline: <https://mensline.org.au/>

1800Respect:

<https://www.1800respect.org.au/>



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