



WHEN A NEW BABY CHANGES THE RELATIONSHIP

SUPPORT BEFORE RESENTMENT - PROTECT RECOVERY, CONNECTION, CONSENT, AND THE BABY'S NEEDS

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A NEW BABY CHANGES THE WHOLE SYSTEM

- Sleep, meals, chores, attention, intimacy, finances, routines, and emotional availability may all change.
- This does not automatically mean the relationship is failing. The household may simply be operating with less capacity while meeting intensive infant needs.
- Both adults can have needs while some needs are temporarily more urgent.



RECOVERY IS A REAL NEED

- A baby's safety and basic needs require dependable adult care.
- The person whose body went through pregnancy and childbirth may also need sleep opportunities, food, hydration, medical care, pain management, hygiene, and physical recovery.
- Recovery is not a household chore that should wait until everyone else's needs are met.



BEFORE RESENTMENT BUILDS

- Instead of "You never spend time with me," try: "I miss you. What is taking the most out of you right now?"
- Instead of "You are not meeting my needs," try: "What support would help you have more rest or breathing room so we can reconnect?"
- Ask what you can take off the other person's plate before demanding more bandwidth.



YELLING DOES NOT CREATE CAPACITY

- An exhausted new parent may already fear they are failing the baby, partner, work, household, or themselves.
- Yelling, humiliation, scorekeeping, or repeated criticism adds another demand to an overloaded system.
- Name the need without turning the other person into the problem.



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+ DIVIDE LABOR BY CAPACITY AND RECOVERY

- List feeding-related tasks, diapers, soothing, laundry, meals, appointments, cleaning, shopping, older-child care, pets, nighttime tasks, and administrative work.
- Divide work based on safety, physical recovery, feeding realities, employment, disability, health, sleep, and available support - not assumptions about gender.
- Revisit the plan as recovery and the baby's needs change.

+ CONNECTION CAN BE SMALLER FOR A WHILE

- Connection may mean ten quiet minutes, bringing food, taking the baby while a partner showers, protecting a block of sleep, holding hands, sharing tea, or asking how they are doing without immediately asking for something back.
- Small connection still counts.

+ INTIMACY WITHOUT ENTITLEMENT

- Affection, companionship, and sexual connection may change after childbirth.
- Neither partner should have to provide physical or sexual intimacy to prove love, prevent anger, or regulate the other person's emotions.
- Pain, healing, exhaustion, feeding demands, hormones, trauma history, medical guidance, consent, and readiness all matter.

+ WHEN MORE SUPPORT IS NEEDED

- Seek prompt professional help for severe, rapidly worsening, frightening, or persistent symptoms or major loss of functioning.
- Urgent concerns include suicidal intent, thoughts or behavior suggesting the baby may be harmed, severe confusion, hallucinations or delusions, extreme agitation, violence, or other immediate danger.
- Stress and sleep deprivation never excuse coercion, threats, sexual pressure, stalking, intimidation, or violence.