



Navigating the Fourth Trimester

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What comes to mind when you think of a new parent/caregiver?

Physical changes:

- Breast/chest enlargement
- Uterus deflation
- Bleeding
- Organ adjustment
- Hair loss
- Skin issues

Hormonal changes:

- Estrogen & Progesterone - rapid decreases after birth
 - Prolactin - Milk production, parental behaviours and anxiety reduction
 - Oxytocin - Parental behaviours
 - Testosterone - protective behaviours; low levels lead to attachment behaviours
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Neurological changes:

A reduction of grey matter in the social areas of the brain has been found in pregnant people. This suggests that the brain undergoes a “pruning” process in pregnancy to enhance/enforce connections that promote empathic behaviours. These changes were found to continue to exist up to two years after giving birth (Hoekzema, et al, 2016).

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9LXRB6fNWA>

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Sleep deprivation:

Effects of sleep deprivation:

- Memory deficits
 - Decreased learning generalization
 - Increased negative emotions
 - Increased likelihood of mental illness
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Tips for Insomnia:

- Blue light outside of the bedroom
 - Monitor caffeine and alcohol use
 - Consider exercise during the day
 - Decrease stimulation during nighttime wakes
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Mental Health:

“Baby Blues”

- 2-week period of mood swings, incessant crying, anxiety, cognitive deficits, insomnia
 - 10-80% of birthing women
 - Hormone fluctuation and social pressures
 - Give yourself some time and grace to adjust
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Postpartum/Perinatal Depression (Major Depressive Disorder)

- Perinatal depression is the most underdiagnosed concern in obstetric practice
- Symptoms: mood shifts, irritability sleep disturbances, weight gain, appetite concerns, anhedonia, suicidal thoughts, lack of focus/concentration

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- Complications: gestational bleeding, preterm delivery, bonding issues with baby
 - Risk factors: previous PPD, lack of support, financial instability, chronic stress, previous pregnancy losses/terminations, unplanned pregnancy, previous abuse
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Perinatal Anxiety (Generalized Anxiety Disorder)

- Is likely more common than perinatal depression, particularly during the pregnancy
 - Generalized anxiety disorder is diagnosed when someone suffers from excessive worry that interferes with daily life activities
 - Complications: premature/low birth weight babies, fetal heart variability, abnormal fetal movement/sleep patterns
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Perinatal OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)

- OCD: characterized by thoughts/urges that are unwanted and cause significant distress as well as behaviours that the individual feels compelled to do
 - Pregnant/postpartum people are 1.5-2x as likely to develop OCD
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Perinatal Bipolar (Bipolar Disorder I or II)

- Mania/hypomania and depression
 - Bipolar 1 vs. Bipolar 2
 - Bipolar disorder can often be misdiagnosed as depression
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Perinatal Psychosis (May fall under a variety of diagnoses)

- Includes symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations, extreme mood fluctuations and disjointed thought or speech patterns
- 0.1-0.2% of pregnant people

- www.app-network.org

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVUyohUGZis&list=PLDGVvwdWYpQink0FfVMABhWbA6k1R9lc&index=1>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye3GIXha-N4&list=PLDGVvwdWYpQink0FfVMABhWbA6k1R9lc&index=2>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQDvp3Q5MK0&list=PLDGVvwdWYpQink0FfVMABhWbA6k1R9lc&index=7>

Postpartum depression in non-birthing partners (Major Depressive Disorder)

- 1/10 dads suffer from depression
- May show other symptoms: indecisiveness, “checking out”, irritability, substance use
- Greatest risk factor is a partner who is also suffering from depression

Other related concerns:

Trauma

Strategies: find a safe place to tell your story, learn to regulate your body and nervous system, find places where you do have power and control

Anger and rage

Strategies: movement, creativity, safe strategies to get distance from baby

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Anger and rage

Strategies: when we shine a light on shame, it cannot exist

Societal Pressure

Strategies: surround yourself with supportive voices, focus on your values and what you want to install in your baby

Grief

Strategies: be willing to allow your emotions to exist, share stories of your loss with safe people, establish rituals or connections to loved ones, use art or music for emotional expression

Fear/Existential worries

Strategies: Talk to other parents, focus on what you do to keep yourself and your baby safe, challenge your negative beliefs, take small steps to expose yourself, learn to calm the nervous system

Set the stage for health:

- Exercise
- Healthy Diet
- Breaks from baby
- Healthy social supports
- Time to disconnect

Challenging thoughts:

Have I been in this kind of situation before?

What would I tell a friend going through this?

How much of this situation is in my control?

How much will this worry matter next month or next year?

What is the worst-case scenario?

What is the best-case scenario?

What is the most realistic scenario?

Relationships

Stresses on Romantic relationships:

- Redistribution of roles in the home
- Sleep deprivation/irritability
- Change in need for adult contact
- Feeling left out
- Too many demands = less fun

Strategies:

1. Connection rituals

2. Date nights

3. Scheduling sex

4. Focus on the positives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ib7Ain2aVRO>

Resolving conflict:

- Speak for yourself
- Check in on your boundaries
- LISTEN
- Focus on the root problem
- Deal with things as they arise

DEAR MAN:

- Describe
- Express
- Assert
- Reinforce
- Mindful
- Appear Confident
- Negotiate

Validation:

- Listening and paying attention
- Paraphrasing
- Watching the non-verbals
- Pay attention to the context
- Acknowledge what is valid
- Show equality

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHR0g>

What areas are you expecting to need some support after baby is born? What ways would you like to continue to connect with your spouse?

Boundaries with Family and Friends:

- Unsolicited Advice
- Unexpected visitors
- Expectations and Judgement

How to set boundaries:

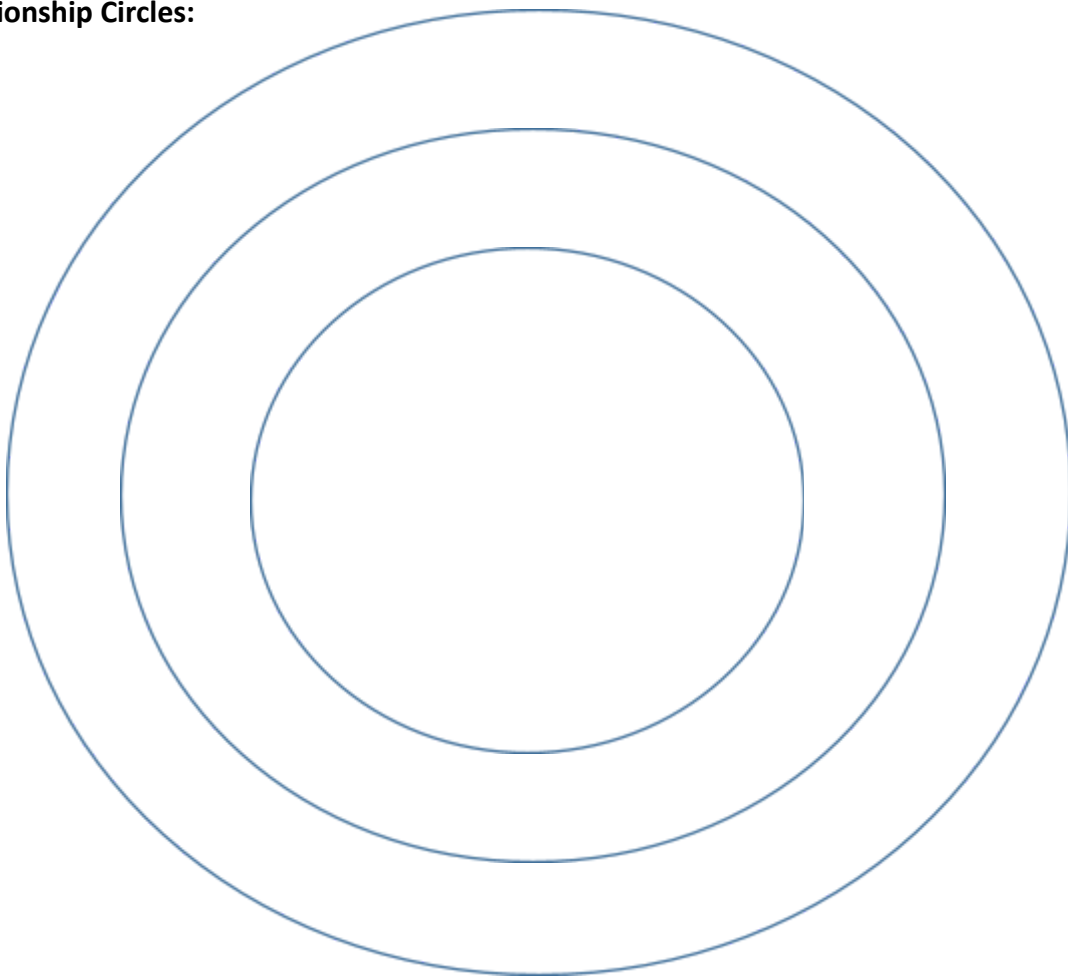
- Tips: look at areas you may need boundaries, reframe this as setting yourself up for a long term success, be clear and direct on what you want and the consequences of this behaviour, do to overexplain, remind yourself that you are not responsible for other's feelings

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Loneliness and Isolation:

- When your friends do not have children
- Feeling housebound with baby

Relationship Circles:



Making new friends:

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- Meeting people: new parent groups, online apps or groups, baby and me classes, library programs, explore current relationships
 - Building new friendships: ask questions, build on things in common, open up, ask them to spend time, reframe the awkwardness
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Adjusting with other children:

- Expect a variety of reactions
 - Hold empathy for all of the feelings and use this as a learning opportunity
 - Help the child feel special with one-on-one attention
 - Continue with predictable routines and avoid any other big changes
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Asking for help:

- Clear and direct requests
 - Empathize but not apologize
 - Reinforcement
 - Dealing with disappointment
 - Being clear in your needs
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Caring for a new baby

Attachment theory:

- John Bowlby - innate need to attach
 - Develops a sense of self and understanding of the world
 - Loving your child and being responsive to their needs is not spoiling them
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Attunement:

- Tune the dial to pick up someone else's frequency

- Biological and hormonal changes support this activity in new parents/caregivers
 - Serve and return interaction
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apzXGEbZht0>

The good enough parent:

- Exposure to frustration can be beneficial
 - A natural progression in parenting
 - Follow up with repairs
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Getting through with baby:

Strategies:

1. Survival Mode! Forget the routine!
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2. Plan in Advance
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Breast/Chest Feeding:

- Fed is best
- Colostrum and milk let down
- Supply and demand
- Supply regulation
- Mastitis
- How often to feed
- Latching
- Nipple pain
- Keeping baby awake during feeds

Notes:

Tracking diapers:

- 24-48 hours: 2 wet diapers and one bowel movement (meconium)

- 48-72 hours: 3 wet diapers and 3 bowel movements (transitional stools)
- 3-5 days old: 4 heavy, wet diapers and 3-4 bowel movements
- 6+days: 6 heavy, wet diapers and 4+ bowel movements

Notes:

Bottle Feeding:

- Nipple sizes
- Sterilization
- Do not leave baby alone with bottle
- Throw away unused milk/formula after feeding

Safe sleep:

- Flat, firm surface; no moveable material around baby; put baby down on their back; sleep sacks; not too hot

Day/Night confusion:

- Start your day at 7-730am
- Exposure to daylight during the day
- Keep rooms quite dark and under stimulating at nighttime
- Many newborns won't actually go to bed until 10-1030pm

Swaddling:

- Can help baby sleep as it recreates feelings of being in the womb
- Lightweight, not too tight on the bottom and snug enough that baby won't get out

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ioISOof-EDpc>

Bathing:



- Babies do not need to be washed every day
- Be cautious about the umbilical cord stump
- Never, ever leave baby unattended in water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RnxD-KRkw8>

Car seat safety:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDnVE6t-vbc>

Infant first aid:

- Prevent accidents when possible
 - Keep a hand on baby if they are lying anywhere higher than floor level
 - Never leave unattended in water
 - Keep suffocation hazards out of crib/bed
 - Infant first aid courses
 - Call 911 immediately if:
 - Trouble breathing
 - Turning blue-grey
 - Will not wake
 - Going limp
 - Underarm temperature lower than 36.5C (97.8F) or higher than 37.5 C (99.5F)
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Doctor visits:

- Come in with questions! Doctors are there to help.
- Consider writing your questions in advance and having some support to help you remember information
- Keep your diaper bag packed for messes or hungry babies

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Calming upset babies:

- Hungry/dirty/tired?
 - Snuggles!
 - Heartbeat noises
 - Swinging in car seat
 - Going for a drive
 - Talk to your pharmacist about gas pains
 - Colic
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Calming yourself:

- Temperature
- Intense Exercise
- Paced Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Self-Soothing
- Square breathing

Notes:

Playing with baby:

- Skin to skin
 - Tummy time
 - Singing
 - Looking
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Developmental Milestones (0-3 months):

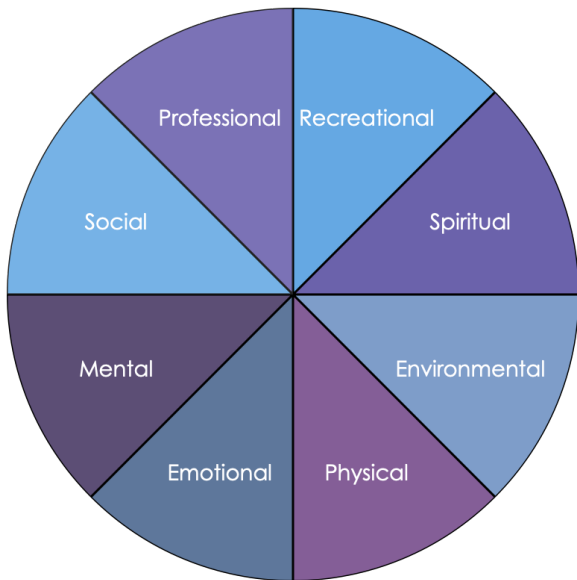
- Lift head for a moment
- Move head from side to side
- Interested in faces
- jerky limb movements
- brings hands to face
- responds to loud sounds
- blinks at bright lights
- social smiles

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- tracks objects moving slowly
- begins cooing or gurgling
- straightening legs
- may recognize caregivers
- reflexes (Moro/stepping/rooting/grasping)

Reformatting Identity

- How we see ourselves: Memories, likes, relationships, experiences, goals, skills, values
- Parenthood/caregiving has a profound change on identity



Notes:

What parts of yourself need to be stimulated to help you feel more “you”?

Role modelling:

- Not living by our values leads to us feeling discomfort and unsatisfied
 - Role modelling how to live by our values is a great lesson for children
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Keeping aspirations:

- You can still keep your previous goals - just be flexible
 - You can also let go of old goals that no longer speak to you
 - Try to minimize the pressure you put on yourself
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Self-Compassion:

- Kindness over Self-Judgement
 - Common Humanity over Isolation
 - Mindfulness over Over-identification
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The “Good Stuff”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTT6ZWGaX94>

Books:

- The Happiest Baby on the Block- Harvey Karp, M.D.
- How to be a Happier Parent - KJ Dell’Antonia
- What to expect: The first Year - Heidi Murkoff and Sharon Mazel
- Beyond the bump- Sally Shepherd
- Karen Klieman

Resources:

- GP/Doctors and Mental health therapists
- Local parenting groups

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