



New Parents: How to Make Time for Self-Care While Taking Care of a Newborn

By Janice Russell

From the moment you bring your newborn home, your schedule shifts into hyperdrive. Suddenly you have a totally adorable, totally helpless little human being in your house, utterly dependent on you to survive. Babies need an astounding [16-17 hours](#) of sleep a night. Yet, they also sleep in snatches of two to three hours at a time. Unfortunately, it's estimated that you'll lose about 350 hours of sleep your first year as a new parent. That's why it's important to follow these tips for new parents on how to make time for self-care while raising a newborn.

The Nap Is King

It's true, getting enough rest during the first year with your newborn will be a struggle. But it's one you can accomplish, with some planning. If you live with a partner, rotate nights that you get up with the baby, so that at least one of you get an undisturbed night's rest. And whether you live with a partner or alone, work in as many [catnaps](#) as you can. Even 20-30 minutes of cycling through your REM stages goes a long way in restoring you. While you should be attentive to your baby, try turning off the baby monitor as time goes on. Letting your baby learn how to go back to sleep after he or she has cried a little eventually teaches your little one how to sleep through the night.

Hygiene's a Must

Piles of laundry are strewn down the hall, the pan of stew is boiling over onto the stove and the baby's shrieking in the other room. Do you really have time to make sure you've showered and put deodorant on? If you don't, make time. Hygiene matters. The more germs in your house, the more germs you'll pass onto your baby. Basic cleanliness habits include [brushing and flossing](#), and washing your hands each time you handle raw food, go to the bathroom or pet or groom your dog. Separate your baby's laundry from everyone else's, and launder your baby's towels, clothes and bedding separately at 140 degrees Fahrenheit to kill bacteria.

Parenting Strategies for Dad

A number of [obstacles](#) stand in the way of more fathers getting involved in raising their kids, even more so if those dads are going through a divorce. One parenting strategy for dad to stay actively involved in his kids' lives is to maintain a good relationship with his kids' mom. Even though they may not be best friends, they can share responsibilities amicably, so both parents let each other work in time for their children in their schedules. Similarly, one of the worst points of contention two divorced people can have is custody. Resolving that issue can curb the tendency to revert to knee-jerk reactions of shame and frustration and withdrawal.

Self-Care

Even though raising a baby will consume your time, it's still important to pay attention to your own [self-care](#). Make peace with the fact that your home is going to be chaotic for the first year (or 18). Stick to a diet of fruits, veggies and lean meats.

Assemble a support system

If you're close with coworkers, buddies from college, a babysitter or nanny you trust, don't hesitate in contacting them when an emergency comes up. Try to carve out one hour of the week for yourself – for a long bath, a massage, coffee with your best friend – so long as you get some well-deserved R&R.

Dear new parent: Say goodbye to your independence. Feel free to mourn it. Your schedule's going to be topsy-turvy for the next few decades. But also be sure to look forward to the joys -- and challenges -- of parenthood.

Writer: Janice Russell

Janice Russell believes the only way to survive parenthood is to find the humor in it. She created www.parentingdisasters.com so that parents would have a go-to resource whenever they needed a laugh, but also to show parents they aren't alone.

Image via [Pexels](#)