

# Couples

## and their new baby

**T**here is nothing quite like the joy and excitement of waiting for a new baby to arrive. Visions of folded white romper suits, cuddles on the sofa with sleeping baby between you, or strolling together leisurely in the sun pushing the buggy flood your mind. The cot, and a multitude of other equipment are ready, books have been bought and read, the delivery plan has been made and now you are ready. Sometimes we have moments of these visions becoming reality but there can be other events, feelings and relationship dynamics that we never could have imagined. The birth of a child can bring more potential joy to a couple than any other but it can also have enormous impact in other areas - some not as pleasant as we had wished.

The challenges a child can bring can start even in labour. If the birth has not gone exactly as imagined one or both partners might hold resentment towards medical practitioners, each other, or even the baby in some cases! This can leave one or both of the couple in shock and with disappointment. Breastfeeding can sometimes be harder than imagined leaving the mother with particularly complex feelings. The extra demands a baby can make may mean it is sometimes difficult to find the same time for work, other family members and friends. This can be especially challenging when managing the dynamics of siblings or children from previous relationships. Sleep deprivation frequently occurs which can affect your mood; behaviour, libido, concentration and ability to function. On top of all that new power issues about best approaches and issues around bringing up the child start to emerge. It can be bliss, that's why we are all here, but it is not always easy. We presume that baby will just fit in with us, however that is seldom the case and the reality is that we have to fit in with baby.

Here I want to share some of the more difficult and less

talked about common problems that regularly happen when we become parents.

### **Frequent issues for dads**

It is not unusual for a child to create feelings of jealousy within the fathers. Dads can quietly resent the attention they used to receive from their partner now going to their child - more so if they have a boy. This can be exacerbated if mum is breastfeeding or is taking the responsibility of the bulk of childcare, dads may find they feel a bit redundant or reduced to the position of PA. He may resent that he does not get the same amount of time, not only with the partner, but also with the baby. These feelings are completely normal but can be uncomfortable or difficult to admit to.

### **Frequent issues for mums**

Often women can find that life with a newborn can be lonely. The change from independent career woman to sometimes twenty four hour caregiver of a demanding newborn can be enormous and overwhelming. Financial changes, which often see incomes drop but outgoings rise, can be stressful. This can be more so if money becomes a tool for power and control between the couple. Even if

dad is very hands on he is often at work and therefore not as involved in the everyday needs of the child. Sometimes a new mother can find it difficult to find the space to shower or even go to the toilet! It can take time and energy for new mothers to meet other women in the same position making them sometimes feel isolated, which can quickly effect confidence and sense of self. This in turn can create feelings of guilt, disappointment, and resentment and sometimes lead to depression.

### **The effects on your sex life**

It can be a relief for couples to know that childbirth frequently affects a couple's sex life and that this is a normal occurrence. Often during pregnancy one or both partners desire or drive can alter and this often continues after the baby is born. A woman's body goes through enormous changes and needs time to adjust and heal during the early days; hormones often can decrease her libido. One or both of you can be just too tired for sex. It is important to bear in mind that other couples who experience a dip, or nosedive in their sex lives are much less likely to talk about it than those who don't. This can increase

anxiety and pressure around the issue which usually only makes the matter worse.

### **Sleep**

Sleep deprivation is a well-recognised and easier topic to talk about. The impact of this however is not often recognized, particularly the effect it can have on the couple. It can become increasingly difficult to have emotional time and energy to engage in each other's daily or inner world. This can make the couple feel disconnected, bewildered and unable to remember their common ground. In turn, meaning that issues that need addressing don't, or can't, get dealt with. As they build, resentment grows and it can become difficult to pinpoint or deal with the original source.

### **Conflict**

All of the above factors can lead to the couple arguing more than before and finding it less easy to resolve the conflicts on their own. If you feel that having a baby has damaged your relationship it is important to get help before you and your partner feel like the relationship is beyond repair. A trained relationship counsellor will enable you to approach your problems without falling

into old cycles of arguing. Communication is the best tool to defuse anger and prevent arguments. Parents can get so caught up in caring for the baby that they forget to take time to talk to each other. Small annoyances grow when you don't get them out in the open, so it's important to make time to communicate.

Couple counselling can offer a safe, gentle, neutral environment where these difficult issues can be explored and understood. New ways of managing the complex roles and dynamics can be found and strategies created to hopefully support the relationship and family unit. Counselling can often remind a couple why they are together and what is right about their relationship while at the same time addressing the new challenges that the relationship faces. The couple will hopefully find themselves growing and evolving into parenthood in a more enjoyable and constructive manner.



- Couple Counselling
- Individual Counselling
- Counselling for Children and Young People

**“Children are happier when their parents have a successful relationship”**

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## **Are you feeling; sad, helpless, anxious, bereaved, angry or stressed?**

These are just a few of the issues that counselling can help with. Talking about present and current difficulties can sometimes unlock or highlight past experiences that may be hindering us from reaching our potential.

I aim to build on strengths and find strategies to help with difficulties. I offer a warm and relaxed environment that aims to help people feel as comfortable as possible. I have over sixteen years experience. I am accredited member of with comprehensive insurance. Prices vary depending on income.