



**A New Parents' Survival Guide from
DR. KARP**

The Top Ten Tips for Parents of New Babies

All new parents know if you ask five people for their advice, you'll get ten different opinions. Here is my list of sanity-saving survival tips to help you endure the challenges of your baby's first months.

1. Trust Yourself: You Are the Latest in the Unbroken Chain of the World's Top Parents

Most new parents alternate between feeling like a major-league pro and an inept rookie.

But, always remember: You are part of an unbroken chain of successful parents that stretches all the way back to the beginning of time!

Trust your feelings and relax, all your baby needs right now is milk and your nourishing love.

2. Lower Your Expectations

Many pregnant couples today have never even touched a newborn, yet they expect to automatically know what to do the moment their baby is born. Another little-told truth about becoming a parent is that many new moms and dads *don't* feel smitten right away. Falling in love might take a little time.

Also, your hormonal rollercoaster often leads to forgetfulness. And, ditziness is made ten times worse by exhaustion. Clear thinking is tough in the face of sleep deprivation. So be patient and kind to yourself.

3. Accept All the Help You Can Get

Never in history were a mother and a father expected to care for their baby *all by themselves*. Get help and don't feel guilty about asking - or paying - for it. Lean on your support network to help take care of *you*—you'll pay it back later.

4. Get Your Priorities Straight: Should You Take a Break or Do the Dishes?

Addressing baby announcements and retuning phone calls is NOT your top job. Don't try to do too much and remember to rest. Fatigue can make you depressed, irritable, and distort your view of the world like a fun-house mirror. So please get some rest!

5. Be Flexible: It's Better to Bend Than to Snap

The universal bumper sticker of parenthood says, "Be flexible...or die!"

It's fun to choose which parenting options make sense to *you*, but, it's important to be flexible and recognize when things are not going as planned.

6. Know Thyself: How Do Your Baby's Cries Make You Feel?

Your baby's screams may trigger a flood of upsetting feelings. You may suddenly remember voices of anger, criticism, and ridicule from long ago. Fatigue and stress can fool your mind making innocent cries feel like stinging attacks. This is normal. Share your feelings with someone who cares about you. Discuss your past pains, will help you see how unrelated your baby's cries are to those old experiences.

7. Don't Rock the Cradle Too Hard: Babies, Frustration, and Child Abuse

The sound of a baby's cry sets off a "red alert" inside our brains. This crying can sometimes push even a loving parent over the edge into the dark abyss of child abuse when coupled with fatigue, depression, financial stress, hormonal chaos, family conflict, and a history of being abused.

When you're near your breaking point; get some help. Talk to a friend, relative, or crisis hotline.

8. Keep Your Sense of Humor Handy

You don't want to make mistakes, but you will. Remember, perfection is found only in the dictionary. So, forget dignity, forget organization, be gentle with yourself and *laugh, laugh, laugh*. Laughter raises your spirits, lowers your stress and is exactly what this doctor orders.

9. Take Care of Your Spouse (S/he Just Might Come in Handy Someday)

Taking care of a new baby is so demanding it's easy for a parent to start feeling like s/he's giving a 110% effort (usually true) and their partner is giving only 75% (usually false). Caring for your baby is only half your job; the other half is giving each other some TLC. Dads must support and adore their wives; moms must nurture and caress their husbands. Cut each other some extra slack and avoid harsh criticisms.

10. Don't Ignore Depression: The Uninvited Guest

As shocking as it sounds, approximately forty percent of new moms experience unhappy feelings during the weeks after giving birth. Becoming tearful, worried, or exhausted

yet unable to sleep may all signal postpartum depression? Get help!