




The Postpartum Plan

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While the arrival of a new baby (or babies) is a time of great joy and excitement, many new parents are unprepared for the changes that lack of sleep, recovery from the birth experience and having an additional family member can have upon their lives and home. Due to a lack of experience with babies and an unrealistic exposure to life with an infant through mainstream media, many parents find themselves under-prepared for the weeks and months following the birth of their baby. They are under the mistaken


impression that while they might need help for a week or two, things will then calm down and they can settle back into their lives—only now with a baby.

The reality is that the adjustment, both physical and emotional, lasts with some intensity for the first three months following birth; any parent of a baby or toddler will tell you that the challenges do not end there. The *Postpartum Plan Worksheet* is designed to help new parents have realistic expectations of their early months with a baby and set up their support network in advance.

Doulas can help families understand that investing time in making plans before the birth of the baby can be an enjoyable part of the anticipation of what life will be like with a new little one. 


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Postpartum Plan Worksheet

 **SUPPORT FOR REST IN THE EARLY DAYS.** During the days and early weeks following the birth of a baby, new parents need extra help to ensure they meet their needs for sleep. Support during the night, naps and tag-team parenting can all be effective tools. More than one person is necessary to meet this important need. The goal is to schedule this type of support for several weeks. Potential sources of help are family members, friends, doulas and members of a worship community. If gaps are identified, now is the time to strategize how to address this important need.

The following people are available to help us rest:


- _____ is available to help during the day
- _____ is available to help during the day
- _____ is available to help during the evening
- _____ is available to help during the evening
- _____ is available to help during the night
- _____ is available to help during the night

 **HAVING A GROUP OF FRIENDS WHO ARE ALSO PARENTS OF YOUNG BABIES.** Common sense, life experience and research confirm that having someone to talk to who can empathize with our experiences normalizes problems and makes them more bearable. These friends enhance our life, rather than replace our existing support network. If several peers with young babies cannot be identified, then strategize where these friends can be found. Suggestions include childbirth education classes, prenatal/postnatal fitness classes, breastfeeding support groups, common friends, new mom programs, on-line discussion groups and worship communities.

The following people are friends or neighbors with babies of their own:

- _____
- _____
- _____

The plan for building a support network of friends who also have young babies will utilize the following resources:


 **NUTRITIOUS MEALS AND ADEQUATE HYDRATION ARE VERY IMPORTANT.** Friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers and workshop communities can be great resources. It is okay and even advisable to let people know what kinds of meals are preferred. Plan ahead by double batching meals that are prepared in the weeks before the baby's birth. Plan on taking as much as a couple of months before buckling down and preparing meals on a daily basis.

We would like to have food prepared and available for the first _____ weeks after the birth of our baby.

The following are people who would be willing to prepare meals. Arrangements will be made well ahead of the baby's birth:

We will also prepare _____ frozen dishes before the birth.

Nutritious and affordable take-out or delivery options include:

 **THE NEED FOR KNOWLEDGEABLE, EMPOWERING BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT.** Breastfeeding is a natural process, but it does not always come naturally. Few new or experienced mothers are blessed with a community of knowledgeable women to provide education, screening, support and guidance on breastfeeding during the several weeks that it takes to establish breastfeeding. Appropriate support can help to avoid early breastfeeding difficulties—surely everyone's goal!

The following friends or relatives are supportive of breastfeeding:

The following people in my life are not only supportive, they have up-to-date information and can answer questions and make recommendations that will help breastfeeding be successful:

Local DONA postpartum doulas who can come to my home and help with successful breastfeeding initiation are:

Local board certified lactation consultants who can help with any breastfeeding challenges are:

Local breastfeeding support groups where I can find both emotional support and quality breastfeeding support information are:



SUPPORT FOR OLDER SIBLINGS. Older children will experience a time of transition following the addition of a newborn to the family. Welcoming the baby while maintaining a nurturing relationship with older children is a parental goal. Planning ahead for older children to have time to welcome their new sibling but still have special parent time is an important step in ensuring a smooth transition.

Needs of older children might include:

People able to spend quality time with our children as well as drive them to school, daycare and activities include:

Times of day, rituals or special activities that we want to share with our older children include:

Specific strategies that we plan to use to blend this new baby in with our existing family include:



MAINTAINING OUR “US” TIME AND “SENSE OF SELF.” Parents need time to develop their own interests and their relationship as a couple, which does not happen as easily or spontaneously with a new baby. Many parents find that occasional “me” and “us” time helps them to be more loving and better bonded with their baby and as a family unit as a whole. Plan support needs many weeks and even months ahead.

Loving, responsible friends and family members who would willingly provide occasional childcare include:

Loving, responsible professional childcare providers include:

Activities and “breathers” that help me to feel nurtured, rested and energized include:

Activities and “breathers” that will help us to connect and strengthen our bond as a couple include:
