

25 Self-Care Strategies for New Parents

- 1) **Read.** Get a stack of your favorite books or magazines to read while holding a sleeping baby.
- 2) **Join a gym with childcare.** Some parents do this just to take a shower. No joke.
- 3) **Laugh.** Listen to a stand-up comic joke about parenthood. Watch an old movie that you loved in the past. Or, best yet, find some friends to joke with about the trials of new parenthood.
- 4) **Join a parenting group.** See resources for local options.
- 5) **Lower your standards.** Cooking, cleaning and your professional life will all be impacted by a new baby. It's okay not to be functioning well in those areas. Infant care is a 24/7 job.
- 6) **Get help.** If you can afford to hire someone, great. If not, think outside the box. Consider teaming up with another parent to swap childcare or work together to clean each other's houses.
- 7) **Get a haircut.** As silly as it sounds, getting a haircut can make you feel more like yourself.
- 8) **Organize a night out.** If you're an extrovert, organize a night out with your friends. If you're an introvert, organize a quiet evening doing something you enjoy, either solo or with a partner.
- 9) **Document the beauty of the moment.** Get out your camera and take some special photos of your new baby and any older children. You'll treasure those pictures in the future.
- 10) **Get outdoors.** Take a walk, hug a tree, plant a flower.
- 11) **Make routines.** Childcare can be both chaotic and monotonous. Creating routines helps to make the days seem more predictable, for both parent and child.
- 12) **Treat yourself.** Work special treats into your routines. Treat yourself with a walk to a coffee shop, buying some flowers to plant or time to read a magazine.
- 13) **Practice mindfulness.** Try to focus your mind just on what you're doing. When you're with your baby, look him in the eyes and be there with him in this moment.
- 14) **Dance.** Put on some upbeat music and dance for your baby. Pick her up and dance with her.
- 15) **Unplug from social media.** If you're home with baby, it can be tempting to stay plugged into social media to have "adult time." Unplug from it and make some real life social plans.
- 16) **Feed yourself well.** Make a list of real foods that you enjoy. Go to the store and stock up.
- 17) **Learn a relaxation technique.** See resources.
- 18) **Consider parent-child yoga.** Take a class if you can. Otherwise, find instruction online.
- 19) **Buy some postpartum clothes.** Thrift stores are great for buying clothes in "transitional sizes."
- 20) **Manage your anger.** If you're finding yourself irritable, make a list of what is bothering you. Many new parents feel resentful towards their partners. Work through your feelings and figure out what's on your mind.
- 21) **Communicate.** No one around you is a psychic. If you need something, don't expect others to anticipate your needs on their own. Explain, in a respectful way, what would make your life easier as a new parent.
- 22) **Soak.** Take a long, hot bath. Consider making a bath a daily ritual.
- 23) **Get a massage.** Look at local beauty schools for more affordable rates.
- 24) **Journal.** Write about your thoughts during this life transition. Don't judge your thoughts. You may feel guilty or ashamed when you have negative thoughts about parenthood, but those thoughts are to be expected. Taking on a new, 24-hour per day responsibility isn't easy.
- 25) **Sleep.** If you're waking several times per night with a new baby, add two hours to your night's sleep to compensate. Or, if possible, consider napping during the day. Nothing is more important to a new parent than sleep.

Resource List for New Parents

Adding a baby to your family is a big change for parents. It's common for new parents to experience some symptoms related to the stress of the transition to parenthood: including feeling mildly sad or nervous. Improving self-care and social networks can help with these feelings.

Building Social Support

There are parenting groups here in Manhattan, KS that will help you build support:

Little Apple Families: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/JoinLAF/>

Manhattan KS Attachment Parenting: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/JoinAPGroup/>

Parent-Child Activities

The Manhattan Public Library has storytimes and other events, for infants and children: <https://www.mhklibrary.org/events-for-kids/>

Staying Active

Join a Walking Group: Search for a “stroller strides” group that will let you get out, get exercise and see other parents.

Consider Joining a Gym: Some gyms have childcare on-site. This is a great way for new parents to get a short break from parenting and get some exercise and a shower.

Relaxation Strategies:

Free noontime yoga at K-State: <http://www.k-state.edu/nonviolence/links/yoga.htm>

List of research based strategies: <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/stress/relaxation.htm>

Psychotherapy

For new parents experiencing more distress, psychotherapy can be a helpful intervention.

The Prairie Center for Parental Mental Health provides mental health counseling for parents who are struggling with issues related to new parenthood, including infertility, pregnancy loss and stillbirth, and postpartum mood and anxiety disorders. www.theprairiecenter.com

Pawnee Mental Health provides psychotherapy, medication and substance abuse treatment. They accept all forms of insurance and uninsured patients. Katy Tajchman, LMSW is running a therapy group for new mothers. Call 785.587.4300 for more information. www.pawnee.org