

Self care is a high priority

Dear New Mother,

CONGRATULATIONS you amazing woman. You have just done something truly magnificent. You have grown a child within you, and brought them into this world. Extra big kudos to you if this is the first time you have done this - as you have just undergone one of life's transformations to become a mother. A mother has been born as well as a baby.

When I think about you, I can't help but be flooded with memories of my own journey into motherhood. This was 16 years ago for me, but the memories of those early days with my baby boy are vivid. I will never forget the intensity of the love I felt for him, the sweet smell of his head, and how his tiny clothes looked enormous on him. I also remember feeling a rollercoaster of emotions, even slightly out of control at times, I just did not understand - flipping from ecstatic joy to fear, and from hysterical laughter to tears on Day 3. This is normal.

Birth hormones and lack of sleep can do crazy things to you. Sometimes being a new mother can feel overwhelming. ...but remember that all things pass. Forget the 'parenting manual', motherhood is more like an apprenticeship. You can read all the books, but it is really only on the job training where you will find your feet as a parent. Some days may seem hard, especially at the beginning, but you have got this Mama.

Trust yourself. Lower your expectations. Some days if everyone is still alive at the end of the day, it's a good day. If you have been fed and showered it's a great day - well done you. People may want to give you advice and you may find that the advice found in parenting books and websites may contradict each other. As mothers, we all want to do the best for our children, but 'mother guilt' is a thing. You are on a steep learning curve, give yourself some slack. But most importantly, for all the advice and books and websites, nothing will serve you better as a mother than your own instincts. Your mummy brain is powerful and will serve you well to take care of this child. All you have to do is trust it.

Rather than looking outward for the answers, look inward. That's right, you are the expert of your own child. No one will know your babe like you will, so trust yourself to know how to parent this little person in the way that is right for you and your family. Very few books or websites or "experts" will tell you this - to listen to yourself and to follow your intuition. If you find something or someone that strengthens you as a mother, keep them in your life and refer to them whenever you need to. But you must look after yourself.

Self-care needs to be a high priority, otherwise how can you possibly look after someone else. Rest when you can. Go easy on yourself. If this is your first child then this is all new. If you're adding to your family, there will be big adjustments to be made. Get some good people around you if you can, so you can 'download' and ask for help if you need it - whether it be hanging out with friends with babies or kids, joining a mothers group, a playgroup or a gymbaroo, or even meeting another lovely Mum at the park. Oh, and in case no one has told you today - you are doing an amazing job!

It is true what they say: the days may be long, but the years are short. Enjoy the ride and savour those delicious moments with your little one.

Much love and happiest of Mother's Days to you.

xxx