

tips for survival

Dear new Mother,

I have three children aged 8, 6 and 3. Two girls and a boy. They were all terrible sleepers for at least the first two years, fussy eaters, constant breastfeeders and the first was a great big crier for the first four months or so. But we have all come through those crazy early years and survived, and what's more it has been a very rich and challenging adventure.

My best tips for survival of the first few months are: cook dinner (if you are the household chef!) in the morning during baby's first nap, put it in fridge then just microwave it at dinner time, as often babies are more settled and sleep better in the morning and go crazy in afternoon/evening. Do any household jobs/emails etc during that time and then go out for pram walk etc in afternoon to help bub settle during this crazy time. If you are breastfeeding-preserve! Seek help early and often.

Check in with your hospital breastfeeding consultants and local council nurses and get them to give you a list of GP's who understand breastfeeding (they can be hard to find when you need them) if you are having difficulty that requires medication (I had thrush in lactation and it took weeks to find a GP who would give me the anti-fungal medication I needed to get rid of it) breastfeeding can be incredibly difficult and painful for the first 8 weeks but should get better after that, hang in there it is like learning to ride a bike or swim, it takes your body and your baby time to learn to work together and time for you to understand how your milk production works and what it all feels like. Drink plenty of water and eat lots of fresh veg and fruit so you don't get constipated! Happens easily when you are breastfeeding if you don't look after yourself.

Gentle walking every day with bub in pram will help both you and bub feel better and recover from birth-but wear good supportive sports shoes, your feet have been through a lot in pregnancy. Give your body 4-6 months to get back to its natural shape-wear a tummy support to help and be careful of lifting heavy items, your back and tummy muscles have been through lots of changes. Try to go to bed (after bub goes down for the "night" and wake up at the same time every morning as much as possible so the constant night waking of baby doesn't make you feel like you are living through 6 months of jet lag (that was me!) Take a nap once a day if you can (!)

Get to know all the baby/toddler friendly places in your local area and ways to meet other new mothers-like a mother's group etc they can be that mental lifesaver when bub and you and everyone else in your household is feeling stressed. And finally enjoy...watching your baby discover a whole new world, discover it with them and find the joy in seeing the world new again through a child's eyes. This will just get better as they get older.

I still remember the first time my now 8 year old saw a seagull-she was about 10 months and at the beach. She was mesmerised! Wishing you lots of beautiful memories ahead, motherhood is a wonderful and enriching challenge of the body, mind and heart, but you need a positive attitude to truly enjoy it.

Best wishes xxx