

Accept help when it's offered

From one Mum to another,

Greetings. You may be reading this as you enjoy a quiet happy moment to yourself while your little one(s) nap(s), or you may be reading this with a tear stained face and baby spew in your hair.

Whatever the moment, I see you. I understand. You are not alone. I too am caught up in the crazy day to day life that is having a baby. I spent much of my first two pregnancies and the months following either alone or feeling alone. I gave birth to my third baby little over a month ago and this time I REFUSE to make the same mistakes. My gem of wisdom for you today dear Mum is to not do Motherhood alone. And before you start sobbing because your baby's father may not be in the picture, or you may not have grandparents to fuss over the new baby while you rest, neither do I!

Truly, it will be okay. My husband ended our marriage shortly before the birth of our third baby and he moved out soon after. It had been a long and difficult pregnancy and things really fell apart. It happens. I write this because despite being alone with three children, I feel more supported after this baby than ever before! My saving grace has been my connections with other Mums. Get connected any way you can. I know its awkward, but push through! I attend a playgroup once a week. I accepted an offer to go walking with the new mum I just met, and I made a new friend! I finally phoned my cousin back about that coffee date she mentioned 6 months ago. I opened up to my pastor about my husband's behaviour and I let others pray with me.

I openly cried to my maternal and child health nurse and I accepted help from a counsellor. I go for coffee every week and I don't hide my pain or my faults. I accept help when it's offered, be it a box of nappies or a friend taking me to an appointment when my car breaks down. Every bit helps. And the more I open up about my feelings of failure and loneliness the more I realize that almost every other Mum is feeling the same way regardless of age, income, or marital status!

I used to be depressed about being stuck home on a Saturday night with children, but now I plan simple things with friends and we let the kids play while we talk it out (or eat cake). Have you noticed I barely mentioned my sweet baby boy in this whole letter? That is because as much as He takes up my whole world, I've learned that the first year is as much about the new Mum as it is the baby! If Mum doesn't eat and drink her milk supply drops, if Mum is tired and stressed than baby tends to become unsettled. If Mum is isolated than she doesn't cope as well and baby doesn't get the best of her. If Mum becomes anxious or depressed she interacts less and her baby's development is hindered.... The list goes on.

So don't cancel those dinner plans just because it's babies nap time, bring baby along, she can sleep in the pram. Its okay to put yourself first sometimes! Don't not go see that movie just because you are breastfeeding, express some milk and let a babysitter mind baby for a few hours. And if you are in a relationship please don't feel guilty because your spouse no longer has your undivided attention. You are a family now, not just a couple! Each new baby changes everything, but it can change for the better. Enjoy that new little bundle of joy together. Bath him together, talk to him about your shared hopes for his future, let Dad change his nappy or pick out an outfit.

Visit friends together and show off the new addition. Even though you are a family now, DO make time as a couple. When baby naps, watch a movie or simply sit and talk. When time and money allows, go on a date. Baby will be just fine with a family member or sitter! If an evening alone isn't

possible don't stress, even simple gestures like cooking your partners favourite meal, giving them a welcome hug after work each day or telling them what a great parent and partner they are, will keep the relationship healthy. If you happen to have a baby that doesn't sleep well or gets sick often than staying connected (to your partner and others) is even more important.

Feel free to show up to playgroup with unbrushed hair and two hours' sleep. Someone will at least hold the baby and make you a coffee! Don't ever be ashamed of the beautiful mess that is being a Mother. I have a very strong willed 7 year old, a clingy 5 year old with sensory issues and a newborn that constantly wants to be fed.

I am about to leave the house in gym clothes with messy hair and breakfast on my face to go to an appointment. But you know what...? I am happy because I do what works for me. And writing this letter was more important than putting on proper pants. Because I want you to know that you can do this! I already know you're an excellent mother. Because you are an advice seeking, letter reading superhero!

Best wishes xxx