

Becoming a Parent

By Dr. Armann

Holding her for the first time brought a warm sensation all over me. Then out of nowhere it came to me, I was now responsible for the welfare of another human being. While her mother was holding her, I noticed she started to grunt. This is what babies do when they are having trouble breathing. My wife had no clue this was going on, but the nurse gave me 'the look'. I said just give me another minute, and then choking on my own words I told her mother I had to take her to the NICU. As I quickly carried the baby away, I could hear my wife asking what I was doing. The recovery room nurse was explaining the situation to her.

The baby spent the next 4 days in the NICU. She was able to leave the hospital the same day as her mother. Each birth has its moments of joy and excitement; sometimes we are presented with difficult situations which bring on a whole new set of emotions which we may not be prepared to experience. This was not my first child. Even as a physician, I was not prepared for the unfolding events which I was so accustomed to seeing with other families. This was after all my child. No two families have the same experience at becoming parents, and yet I am asked frequently "How do I know if I am doing this parenting thing right?"

Your birth experience will be what you make it to be. Take advantage of what you learn in the birthing classes. The birthing instructors are experienced and the knowledge they pass on will make a big difference in the delivery room. To all the soon-to-be new fathers I say get actively involved in the birthing process. The whole birthing process can be very overwhelming, as can be the delivery room. Just focus on your wife and what her needs are. Be the best coach and partner you can be in the delivery room. To the soon-to-be moms I say do NOT listen to all the horror stories you will hear. Remember people who have a bad experience tell 9, people who have a good experience tell 3. Your birthing experience will be what you make it. Focus on the outcome not the process.

The first few days are all about getting use to having a new life in your family. This baby will keep you up all night and sleep most of the day. In fact babies sleep about 18 to 20 hours a day. This is because while in the uterus the baby would sleep during the day when mom was moving around. Once night came the baby would stir, kick and thump mom while she tried to sleep.

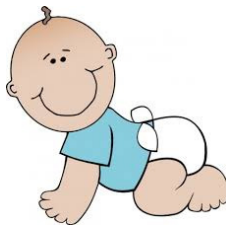
No matter how hard we try to be prepared, parenting is all about the unknown. I like the common sense approach to raising children. Do not over think every situation. Relax when you hold the baby. Not every crying episode requires an intervention. We will not get it right all the time. Succeeding as a parent is all



about being involved at every age and stage of life.

The sound of a new babies' cry is music to my ears. It is the way they communicate with us. Soon after birth the babies will have four distinct cries. I like to say they cry to be held, fed, changed or they just don't know what they want. So change them, hold them, and feed them. Sometimes the baby just needs to cry. They can feel your stress when you are holding them. Distance yourself from the crying, so that your tension will not make the situation worse.

Everyone wants to see the new baby. Before the invasion of family and friends begins set up visitation rules and make sure everyone knows what they are. For example: no one comes over sick. That is no one with a cough, fever, snotty nosed kids or any other illness. During flu season everyone that will be around the baby needs a flu vaccine. If someone doesn't want a flu shot, for whatever reason, tell them this year it is not about them it is about the baby. All family members need to have their whooping cough vaccine up to date.



When family and friends ask what they can do for you, have them make dinner for you. When the grandparents come to help, put them to work. I tell my new mothers they are now the queen and the family can divide up the chores so you can get your rest.

Babies love it when we talk to them. They want to be in a snug loving embrace where they can look into your eyes as you speak to them. Toddlers want to play games with their parents. This is also when your child will test the limits of the word no. When a child is having a temper tantrum, walk away. The better side of discipline is positive reinforcement for positive behavior, pick your battles. Give them lots of love, hugs and kisses for the behavior you want.



Children of all ages are looking for parent approval. Our best bet is to lead by example and have patients with them. Our children will want to do the things we do. They want to have

independence and do things on their own. It is very easy to do everything for them. But how are they going to learn a new skill if they don't have a few failures?

We shine as parents for our school age children. They are excited when we help out in school, coach and marvel at how much we know when we do homework together. Fathers can show they are involved with education by reading to the class. Kindergarten, first and second grade classes are the perfect time to do this. Our children will be very excited when it is their dad reading to the class.

Our teenagers and young adults want truth and honesty. They will resist the rules we put in place. As parents we need to remind them that they are entitled to be loved, have food, clothing, a place to live and an education. Everything else is a privilege and those things are earned. They hear everything we say, even when they are rolling up their eyes at us. Remember you have a captive audience when you are driving. That is the best time to discuss serious life topics.

My daughter is now a teenager and giving me new challenges every day. When I get stressed with her I just remember



those first few precious days and realize the outcome could have been much different. Our time with them is short. Hug them often and keep telling them they are loved, smart and beautiful.