

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

New Baby Stress and Your Relationship, Will We Make It?

It may be surprising to hear that having a child is a difficult and stressful time for many couples. Why is this?

1. Having a child is inherently stressful. We tend to understand the stress associated with "bad" events (losing a job, illness, ending a relationship) and underestimate the stress of "good" events (starting a new job, getting promoted, getting married, moving, having a baby.)
2. Having a child forces couples to define roles and responsibilities in a way that is less important for childless couples.
    - Who cleans the house?
    - Who gets up when the baby cries?
    - What time does the couple get home from work?
    - Who makes what money and who pays for what?
    - If one parent goes to work to provide for the family is (s)he really "helping with the baby" enough?

In so many ways having a baby interferes with the physical intimacy of a couple, but it is this intimacy that marks an enduring relationship. Couples with a new baby are often exhausted by the time they get to bed. Suddenly a couple is in a new, physically demanding role – is it OK for parents to be intimate when they are sleep deprived?

In their role as parents, young couples often come up against gender roles in a way they had not before. There is social and even legal (maternity leave) support for women who stay home to take care of their children. There is less so for men. Division of labor in a family may tend to fall back to traditional roles after a child is born, even when the couple had not done so before.

The good news is that ultimately the ability to communicate and to reach compromises on all these important issues is what marks a successful and enduring relationship in any situation. So, growth is good.

If you need to talk about new parent stress and its impact on your relationship, just call us, your EAP is able to help.

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