



## Healthy vs. unhealthy coping

This tip sheet assumes you have read the ‘What is Coping?’ tip sheet

We all use aspects of different coping styles depending on the situation we are in. When we are faced with something as challenging as having a new baby it can really test the way we cope and we may find that our previous strategies aren’t possible now or simply don’t work.

*“When I had a bad day at work before having a baby I used to go out and have a relaxing drink with my friends. I can’t do that now ‘cos my wife is desperate for me to get home so she can have a break” – Peter 35 years*

*“Before we had a child I used to train for marathon running – it helped me deal with the complex grief I had when I lost my mum. Now I don’t feel like running, I am just so tired and I am not sure what to do” – Jacinta 38 years*

Some parents before children might have used alcohol and drugs as a way to relieve stress however now they are faced with having to cope in another way. It can be quite difficult to know what to do and trying different ways of coping will help find something you connect with. Your partner may cry for hours not knowing what to do, while you may want to jump into problem solving the situation straight away.

Respecting your partner’s style of coping is just as important as trying to find your own way. Try not to use avoidance coping if you can; especially if this involves distancing yourself from your partner, or using drugs and/or alcohol. Working together to problem-solve or supporting one another using an emotion-focused style are the most constructive ways to deal with the ongoing stresses at this time.

For some ideas read our tip sheet on ‘How to cope with a new baby’.