



Healthy relationships

Having a baby can test the strongest of couples. It can be a time of joy, fulfilment and excitement and also a time of anxiety, concern, and fear. Research by 'Bringing Baby Home Program' shows that for 69% of new parents, becoming a parent causes decreased happiness and decreased relationship satisfaction. It is not too difficult to see why when you consider all the stress that a newborn can bring. The aim is to be the best TEAM possible. It helps to have these conversations before the baby is born to protect your relationship, however if the birth has already happened it is better late than never!

The following tips are aimed at keeping your relationship strong over the largest hurdle you will face as a couple:

- » **Find some time for 'us'.** It is important to create couple time. For example it could be a date night at home when the baby is asleep where you have a nice dinner and play cards. Switch off screens and have an hour or two just for you.
- » **Find time for you.** Just as finding time as a couple is important, finding time for you is equally important. Make time to do something you love whether it's seeing a movie with a friend, getting a massage or just being somewhere quiet with a good book. An hour out can refresh your outlook on most situations.
- » **Talk about sex and intimacy.** For some women becoming a mum and being intimate with a partner are contradictory roles and this can be difficult to understand for both her and her partner. For others having to wait 6 weeks after giving birth feels like too long. Either way, try to find ways to be intimate and close without sex and keep talking about it. Being open and staying affectionate will only bring you closer in the long run even if sex is the last thing on your mind.
- » **Build on the friendship part of your relationship.** Research shows the stronger this is the better you will cope through the transition of having a baby. If you are struggling with how to build your friendship look at your close friends and what qualities a lasting friendship takes and try to copy that with your partner. This may include not being judgmental or critical, letting grudges go, reliability, support, etc.

Remember life will always go on, and things will always change. Despite the challenges, many couples come through the first year stronger and more connected than ever. Be an active participant in your relationship and always try to be the best version of yourself so that you contribute to being the best parenting team you can be!