



Welcome to Fatherhood.

We all know that a mother's world is turned upside down with the arrival of a new baby but dads also have some adjusting to do as they welcome their new child into the world. Many modern dads struggle with finding the best way to help their partner bear the load of caring for a new baby but there's plenty they can do to support their partner and bond with their baby at the same time.

The role of fathers in caring for newborns has changed significantly in the last few decades and many first time dads are at a loss when it comes to what role they can play when a new baby joins the household.

North West Private's Parenting Support Services co-ordinator Lorraine Evans said the most common question she fielded from new dads was "how do I help?"

"One of the most common issues we find with parents who aren't the primary carer is that they don't know how to help but there are lots of ways for them to support their partner and at the same time bond with their baby," Lorraine said.

"Feeding is a good example where dads can take over the role of settling and burping after a feed as it gives mum some time away from the baby but also offers a lovely chance to bond with their baby and even get some skin to skin time.

"If partners can help with bath time, stories and songs before sleep it helps your baby become used to both parents managing this role which sets you up for positive sleep associations as your baby grows and settles into a routine.

"Baby massage is another great way for dads and partners to spend time with their baby and it has the bonus of giving mum a break."

As part of her role Lorraine manages the Brisbane Nurture Centre which offers residential programs to help parents adjust to life with a newborn. She said the program included sessions dedicated to helping dads and partners adapt to life as a parent.

"Part of our program in the Nurture Centre is a talk from a psychiatrist on adjusting to parenthood and we offer this session to partners as well.

"It's important that dads and partners realise that feelings of anxiety and uncertainty are normal in the early weeks and months of welcoming a new born into your life. These feelings aren't just isolated to the primary carer – research shows that 1 in 10 dads can suffer from postnatal depression.

"Communication between both parents is essential to maintaining a supportive environment at home and we encourage all parents we work with to discuss good and bad feelings together as they make the journey into parenthood."



Lorraine said trying to find ways to maintain activities you enjoyed before children was a good way for couples to remain connected and positive during a time of huge adjustment.

“There are lots of gains when a new baby arrives but there are also some losses and we encourage parents to try to get out and do a few small things together to stay connected.

“Things as simple as going for a walk at the end of the day, getting a coffee or even a babes in arms movie if they are up to it.”

Above all Lorraine recommends new dads prepare themselves to “go with the flow” in the early period of parenthood.

“As anyone who stays at home with a newborn baby will tell you there will be good days and bad. There’s no magic manual and things that can work one day won’t work the next.

“As time moves on you will get to know your baby’s cues – no mother or father gets it right from day one. Being an engaged parent who wants to support their partner in the love and care of their new born baby is the most important thing.”

Useful links:

www.dadvice.org.au

www.raisingchildren.net.au