

# Finding the Time and Space to Be Together

When a new baby is born, suddenly a Couple transforms into a Family. As wonderful as that transformation is, it's normal for the new parents to sometimes experience grief for the loss of their couple time and their pre-baby relationship.

How can a couple feel connected when there's a new baby to care for?

## Working with Baby's Schedule

Try fitting in couple time around the needs you know baby will have:

Young babies spend a lot of their time feeding. You could declare all of baby's mealtimes official "family time." While baby eats, you don't have to deal with other responsibilities like house cleaning and bill paying, but just sit down together as a couple and chat and check in. Not only will this benefit your relationship, but it sets a nice foundation for the baby viewing meal times as relaxing, social, family times.

If you know the best way to calm baby is to rock her back and forth, why not put on some romantic music, and slow dance as a family till she falls asleep?

If baby will sleep whenever there's a lot of white noise, try putting her in a swing in the bathroom while you take a romantic shower together... the sound of the water and the fan and the movement of the swing may help her to zone out while you connect.

If you feel like you can't keep track of your partner's plans and schedule, you could keep a copy of the calendar by the changing table, and while one person changes baby, the other can update things and remind you both of what's coming up.

If baby is too fussy in the evening to leave with a sitter, try a Sunday morning date.

It's always easier to start with where baby is and what he needs and figure out all the little moments of togetherness we can fit in around baby's needs.

## 5 minute date ideas

It may be hard to predict when you'll find a few moments for together time, but you can make a commitment to seizing those moments when they come. Have a list of ideas for "5 minute dates", or keep a jar with ideas written on small slips of paper. That way, when baby falls asleep for a while, you don't have to be creative (which can be hard for sleep-deprived parents), but you can grab the chance to focus on the relationship.

Here's some ideas to get you started:

- 🕒 Put on a piece of music, hold hands and do nothing for one song.
- 🕒 Rub each other's necks for two minutes each, and end with a full body hug.
- 🕒 Tell your partner what you most appreciate about him/her.
- 🕒 Step outside, and look at the moon and the stars.
- 🕒 Snuggle up on the couch, and talk about a happy memory.
- 🕒 Be silly together: play charades, do a crazy dance, practice silly walks.
- 🕒 Slow down. Just take a few deep breaths, and stop running frantically.
- 🕒 Brush each other's hair, slowly and lovingly.

### Date Nights

Prioritize finding time for you as a couple. Ideally, this is a “real date” (remember those? It's time by yourselves, away from other responsibilities, and other interruptions). If you just can't make that work, then at least try to set aside one evening a week to slip in an hour of date time somewhere. Commit that “sometime tonight, when the baby is settled down, we will have time to focus just on us.”

To maximize the benefits of this time:

- Spend a little time talking about what your expectations are, and about what each of you most needs from the time together.
- Spend some time thinking about: “Of all the things we used to do together, which do I miss the most? And what part of that is most important to me?” (You might not be able to have 100% of what your ideal would be, but think about what 80% of that would look like: what's the really important part that you don't want to give up?)
- Have a plan for contingencies: if X happens, what will we do? If Y happens, who will deal with it? Think: what's the worst thing that could happen? When would we know it was time to give up, and try again some other day? Have alternatives planned.
- Cultivate optimism: do as much as you think you can possibly do (and you may find you can do more than you think).

Even if somehow the date plan fails, you will know: if nothing else, you will have accomplished one very important thing. You will have demonstrated that your relationship is important, and placed a priority on nurturing it. Celebrate that!! Have a plan to try again.