

HOW CAN SUPPORT PEOPLE HELP EXPECTANT AND NEW PARENTS?



FACT SHEET_SUPPORT PEOPLE 25.4.21

HOW CAN SUPPORT PEOPLE (GRANDPARENTS, SIBLINGS, FRIENDS) HELP EXPECTANT AND NEW PARENTS?

Expectant and new parents go through enormous changes in their lives in the lead up to, and when a baby arrives. The concept of a 'village' has changed too with so many living away from their families of origin, which lessens the support available when most needed. If you know a new parent or someone who is expecting a baby soon, there are many ways to help ease the load for them. It can be hard to know what to do without treading on their toes or giving unwanted advice but asking "what can I do for you?" is a good start, as well as just listening to their experience.

Helpful support is both emotional and practical.

Many expectant and new parents, in fact 1 in 5 mums and 1 in 10 partners/dads, experience some form of perinatal depression and anxiety (depressive and anxious symptoms during pregnancy and in the first year of the baby's life). They may not even know they have this medical condition or that it is treatable and temporary. If you hear comments like "I am not feeling myself" or "this is not how it was meant to be" and they seem low in mood, overwhelmed and sad, quick to anger, distant from their baby and friends or even expressing thoughts such as "their families would be better off without them" this needs to be taken seriously. Validate how they are feeling, let them know they are not alone, be encouraging and even offer to get them extra support which could include accessing resources or arranging an appointment with their GP. You could even ask them "what do you need right now?"

Here are a few other ideas:

- Acknowledge how hard it is for them right now and validate their feelings
- Adjust expectations of expectant or new parents; ask them what kind of support they need or make a few suggestions

- Stay in touch regularly without the expectation of a quick response. Sending a message telling the person that you are thinking of them (without expecting a response), is a lovely way to show your support without overwhelming them
- Deliver a meal that can be easily re-heated
- Offer to take their toddler for a walk or to the park
- If they have older children, arrange a suitable time to take them out or play a game with them
- Check before visiting them; respect their need for space if that is what they want
- Encourage self-care times throughout the day
- Suggest virtual supports if you think it might be helpful e.g. lactation support, mental health support or other. However, it is generally best to avoid providing parenting advice
- You could post or drop around some thoughtful gifts
- Do some shopping for them, bake a cake, or offer to clean their house

Usually any support, such as those ideas mentioned above are appreciated, as long as you check first. Privacy and giving them time to adjust is also necessary as they work out how to manage life in a different way. Maintaining connection whilst respecting their needs and allowing space is a thoughtful way to proceed in offering support.

If you are still worried and feel that more specialised support is needed, please contact us at Gidget Foundation Australia on 1300 851 758. 🌸

