Co-Parenting

Co-Parenting: It’s Not a Competition between Two Homes; It’s a Collaboration of Parents Doing What is Best for the Kids.

Children need both of their parents’ love, support, and attention for healthy development and growth. Co-parenting during the first year of your child’s life is associated with better child adjustment in later years and better socio-emotional development. Successful co-parenting involves active cooperation and communication between both parents. This is especially important if the parents no longer share a romantic relationship as successful co-parenting leads to positive father involvement and lower levels of parental conflict. Having low levels of parental conflict is linked to children’s positive behavioral outcomes, academic achievement, and psychological well-being. Co-parenting leads to a sense of stability and normalcy for children, increased consistency in rules, and shared responsibilities and concern for the child.

There are four markers of successful co-parenting:

- children have a good relationship with both parents;
- both parents respond to the needs of their children;
- parents rarely argue and never argue in front of children; and
- parents do not place their children in the middle of conflicts.

Keeping Healthy: New Moms & New Babies

You need to keep yourself healthy. Make sure to follow all of your take home instructions after the birth of your baby and go to your 6-week follow-up (postpartum) appointment, which will help assess your physical and mental health.

If you are having any concerns at all about your health or the baby, talk to your doctor. It is okay to ask for help.

No one expects you to be perfect. As a new mom, you are allowed to feel emotional, confused, or unsure about things. However, if you do not talk to your doctor about your feelings or fears, you might end up doing harm to you or your baby. Postpartum Depression affects roughly 1 in 7 women after giving birth and only a doctor can make this diagnosis. For more information on Postpartum Depression visit this site: https://bit.ly/2CxSibz. Remember, there is someone you can talk to, who will listen and be there for you when needed.

Exercising is a good way to keep you balanced and get you back to feeling like yourself. Having a baby and raising a baby is hard work, so make sure you get plenty of healthy food to fuel your best self. They weren’t lying about the lack of sleep you will experience. From night feedings to insomnia, being a parent often results in a lack of sufficient sleep. The effect of sleeplessness goes beyond being tired, it can affect how you think and cope. It is critical that you work to “make-up” on the lack of sleep so that you can parent more effectively. Parents magazine offers some suggestions here: https://bit.ly/2KmzTz7.

Some moms benefit from a strong and active parent or mom support group. You can develop and grow your parent or mom support group using online communities through mobile apps or websites or you can reach out to “mommy and me” groups in your neighborhood. Having a connection with other moms who are going through similar things as you will help you become a stronger parent and to get a sense of what to expect. You are not alone!

Being a parent can be so difficult and often lonely, because of the self-inflicted “mom guilt.” Having a strong support group of moms who can share in your experiences will help lessen these guilt-ridden feelings.

Download the PDF of this pamphlet on our website: FICW.FSU.EDU/TOOLKITS
Keeping Baby Healthy

Keeping your baby healthy will likely be your top priority, as it should be. It is important that you take your child to all well-being visits and follow your pediatrician’s directions or talk to the pediatrician if you have concerns about the recommendations. While you want to follow the advice of your pediatrician, it is okay to ask questions or for a second opinion. You are your child’s best advocate. It is up to you to stay informed and champion for your child’s best care. If something feels off to you or you are unsure of something, ask, question, and seek out the answers. You know your child better than anyone else!

Follow feeding and bathing guidelines for your child’s age. There are some recommended feeding and bathing guidelines available online, but you will want to follow the recommendations of your pediatrician’s office. Again, you will want to follow the advice of the pediatrician, but if you have questions or concerns, make sure you voice those.

YOUR BABY WILL BE UNABLE TO
COMMUNICATE NEEDS FOR SOME TIME, SO IT IS UP TO YOU TO COMMUNICATE THOSE NEEDS.

You are mom, so do not be intimidated by the doctor or nurses. You should have your pediatrician’s office number on hand in case you have questions. In some cases, your pediatrician’s office will have night-staff who will answer calls throughout the night if you are concerned about your baby and need immediate advice. Emergency visits and urgent care visits can be costly and in most cases, the symptoms will not be “emergent”—so using the night nurses is a great way to get your questions addressed without the cost burden. However, if the symptoms are concerning to you and you do not feel like you can wait to have your child seen; you should seek out emergency care. Here are six signs that you need to take your child to the ER:

- Your baby is having trouble breathing.
- Your baby has a severe headache or neck pain.
- Your baby has a seizure.
- Your baby is not responsive to your calls.
- Your baby has a high fever.
- Your baby has a severe rash.

If you do go to the emergency room or urgent care, your pediatrician will want to know about those visits and coordinate with those providers to make sure your baby is getting the best care.

Safety Planning

Safety plans are important considerations, particularly in emergency situations. Being a mom, even a seasoned mom, can be stressful. If you are frustrated with your baby’s crying, lay the baby down in the crib or other safe place and go into another room until you can calm yourself. Call for help. Sometimes babies cry for hours and nothing you do seems to help. This can be so overwhelming and make you feel like you have no one to lean on, which can cause more stress. Having a safe place to put your baby down (such as the crib) when you need to relax or take a break can help reduce your anxiety and give you time to come back to your baby refreshed. It is okay to put your baby down, especially if you need a break. You may need to call on a trusted friend or relative who can watch your baby to give you some time to relax.

REMEMBER, NO ONE PARENTS ALONE, RELY ON YOUR “VILLAGE” TO HELP IF YOU NEED A BREAK.

There are severe risks associated with even mild “shaking” or jolting your baby. Approximately, 1,300 cases of shaken baby syndrome occur in the U.S. each year with approximately, 325 children dying each year and 780 children have lifelong disabilities. It is also considered the leading cause of child abuse deaths in the U.S. and occurs most frequently in babies less than 6 months old. Know the risks of Shaken Baby Syndrome—it doesn’t take much to hurt your baby. https://bit.ly/2TYiHRx. It is better in the long run for you and your baby to lean on a trusted friend or relative or for you to put your baby down for a short time for you to regain some control of your emotions. Here are videos on Shaken Baby Syndrome: https://bit.ly/19JN9F and https://bit.ly/2s1Vibj.

Safe Sleep

Safe sleep is likely something you have heard before, but might not be familiar with all of the recommendations by the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Health.

YOUR BABY SHOULD ALWAYS BE
PUT TO SLEEP ON THE BACK, AND NEVER CO-SLEEP (SHARE A BED) WITH YOUR BABY.

These important recommendations are in place to keep your baby healthy and safe and to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). According to recent statistics approximately, 3,500 infants died in sleep-related deaths, with co-sleeping being a major contributor to this number. See more here: https://bit.ly/1Ng2uVi.

Bonding and Attachment

Bonding, including attachment, is important for you and your baby and it is the foundation for your relationship with your child. Your baby uses you as a base from which to explore the world and when necessary a base of safety and comfort. Attachment develops over time based on your response when your baby is scared or ill or physically hurt. Attachment is a strong predictor of your child’s later social and emotional outcomes. Circle of Security offers the below chart on attachment and other helpful information on their website: circleofsecuritynetwork.org/the_circle_of_security.html.

Put to Sleep on the Back

Always: Be BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND. Whenever possible: Follow your child’s need. Whenever necessary: Make change.