

5 ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW FOR A SMOOTHER TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

 [@THEATTACHMENTDOCTOR](https://www.facebook.com/THETATTACHMENTDOCTOR)

1. PRIORITIZE YOUR NEEDS FOR REST AND SELF-CARE.



You, Mama, are growing a little human being. This is both a miraculous and physically demanding experience that requires special attention and respect. During this time, as well as during and after your birth, your physical and emotional health should be a priority. So, get some extra sleep, eat as healthily as you can, move your body in ways that feel good (with the okay from your health care providers), and connect socially with others safely in person, or online. Remove unnecessary stress from your life as much as you are able. Say no to things that don't serve you right now, conserving your energy instead for pregnancy, birth, and caring for a newborn. Your partner's needs are important also. So partner, rest and care for yourself as well. Find time to connect together as a couple. Make these actions a top priority now and as you grow into your family.

"SAY NO TO THINGS THAT DON'T SERVE YOU RIGHT NOW, CONSERVING YOUR ENERGY INSTEAD FOR PREGNANCY, BIRTH, AND CARING FOR A NEWBORN."

2. CONNECT WITH YOUR BABY.



Your relationship with your baby is already evolving, before your baby is born. As your baby is growing inside of you, they experience what you experience. Spend time talking, singing, and reading to your baby. Tell them about your daily life, their relatives, the things you're looking forward to doing together. If you have an unexpected, stressful experience in your life, let your baby know what is happening. Tell them, in simple terms, why you are angry, hurt, frustrated, scared, or sad. And let your baby know it isn't their stressful experience to worry about because you as the parent(s) are taking care of the situation to the best of your abilities. Building solid communication skills with your child at this stage creates a foundation of trust, helps lessen anxiety, and allows your baby to understand how their parents are adults who can manage life's ups and downs.

"SPEND TIME TALKING, SINGING, AND READING TO YOUR BABY. TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR DAILY LIFE, THEIR RELATIVES, THE THINGS YOU'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO DOING TOGETHER."

3. BUILD YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT TEAM.



Even if you are an introvert, having social support as you move into parenthood is paramount. We need people who understand what we are going through—who get that spending a lot of time talking about sleep-deprivation or poopy diapers is pretty normal when you become a parent. Now is a great time to create and develop your tribe. If you already have friends who are new parents, you may find yourself leaning more on these people in your first years of parenting. Join groups for expectant parents, such as birthing classes or prenatal exercise classes. You might be amazed at how critical it can feel to take a stroller walk with someone else who has just become a parent. And while the current pandemic has impacted our abilities to gather, we can still connect, even if it's not exactly the way we wish it would be.

"NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO CREATE AND DEVELOP YOUR TRIBE."

4. ORGANIZE YOUR POSTPARTUM SUPPORT TEAM.



Continuing on the theme that parenting is not meant to happen in isolation, plan for as much support as you can tolerate during the first 3-to-6+ weeks postpartum. This is critical bonding time for your family, as well as time to physically heal from birth, and navigate becoming a new parent. Having others make food for you, care for your pets, or clean allows you some uninterrupted time to focus on you and your baby. Support can be scheduled on one of many online systems, with food being left outside the door in a cooler, allowing your new family to be undisturbed. Ask a friend or family member to handle the scheduling for you. Prior to birth is also a good time to gather reliable contacts for support with breastfeeding, sleep, or other challenges that might arise, such as postpartum mood disorders. Keep these contacts in an easily-accessible place for both you and your partner, so you aren't stressed about finding them if you need them in the moment after your baby is born.

"HAVING OTHERS MAKE FOOD FOR YOU, CARE FOR YOUR PETS, OR CLEAN ALLOWS YOU SOME UNINTERRUPTED TIME TO FOCUS ON YOU AND YOUR BABY."

5. TAKE CARE OF IMPORTANT SAFETY AND ORGANIZATIONAL MEASURES, AND DISCUSS FUTURE ONES.

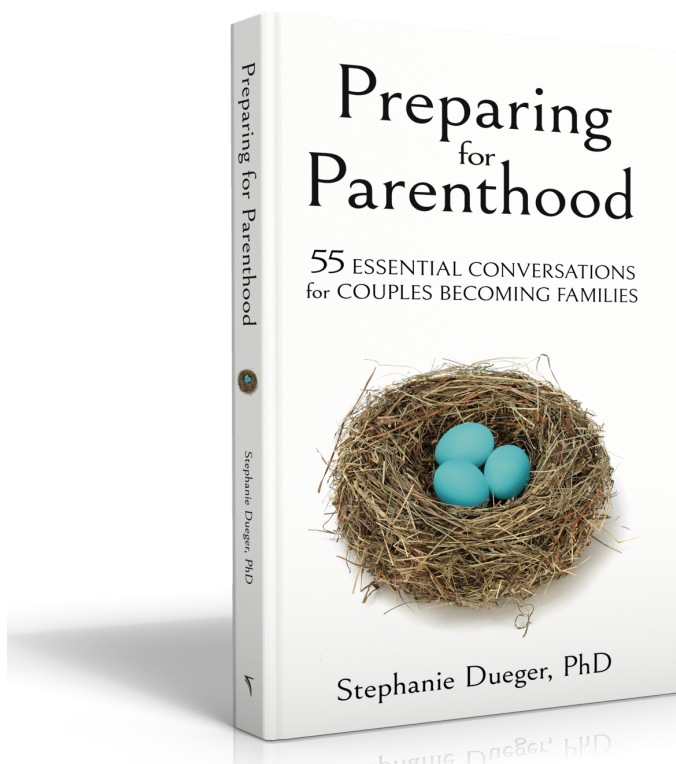


More often than not, things generally tend to go well. However, it's always wise to be as prepared as possible when it comes to safety and planning. So, install an infant car seat before you need it. Organize and clean your space so you're ready to have your new family member join you. Create a will and designate guardians, just in case (usually best done with the support of a lawyer). Do some research to understand procedures that you may be asked to make decisions about just after birth. For example, talk about various newborn tests, vaccinations, and other procedures that will likely be offered for your baby and come to agreements you are comfortable with as a couple along with your health care providers.

Understand the policies surrounding birth and afterwards. For example, barring emergencies, will skin-to-skin contact be encouraged just after birth? Will there be support with breastfeeding? If there is an emergency, can the partner stay with the baby? In other words, do your research and plan ahead as much as you can to help lower stress in the moment.

"DO YOUR RESEARCH AND PLAN AHEAD AS MUCH AS YOU CAN TO HELP LOWER STRESS IN THE MOMENT."

FINAL THOUGHTS



We can't anticipate and prepare for everything in becoming parents. But with some research and thoughtful planning, we can help lower our stress levels when something unexpected does arise. To learn more about discussions that may be helpful for expectant parents, read my new book, [Preparing for Parenthood: 55 Essential Conversations for Couples Becoming Families](#), due out in January, 2021. And may your family have an easeful transition to parenthood.

Dr. Stephanie Dueger, Ph.D., LPC, is a somatically-based psychotherapist and educator who works with adults, couples, and families with young children. Her focus is on enhancing early developmental relationships and building healthy attachments across the lifespan. As the mother of two young daughters, she believes deeply in authentic parenting, and that her husband and their children are her greatest teachers. She has trained extensively in somatically-based attachment work and has a psychotherapy practice in Boulder, Colorado.

