

THREE LITTLE BIRDS PERINATAL PSYCHOLOGY

TIP CARDS

INFORMATION, TIPS, SKILLS AND
PRACTICES FOR PARENTS EXPERIENCING
DIFFICULT EMOTIONS IN PREGNANCY
AND POSTNATAL



We are a team of
psychologists passionate
about helping parents and
their babies to thrive

Learn more about us at
THREELITTLEBIRDSPERINATAL.COM



Mindfulness

2 Key Components:

Awareness = noticing thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they happen

Acceptance = Observe without judging or trying to change what you notice



Benefits of Mindfulness:

Although it can be a tricky skill to learn, mindfulness has many benefits.

This includes reducing depression, anxiety and overthinking while improving focus, memory, relationship satisfaction, the ability to adapt to stressful situations, and expanding your capacity to manage emotions



- **TAKE A BATH TOGETHER**

Focus on your senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing) while you splash in the water with your baby

- **WATCH YOUR BABY SLEEP**

Lay your hand on your baby and focus on taking deep slow breaths

- **GAZING INTO YOUR BABIES EYES**

Notice what it feels like to be in each others presence

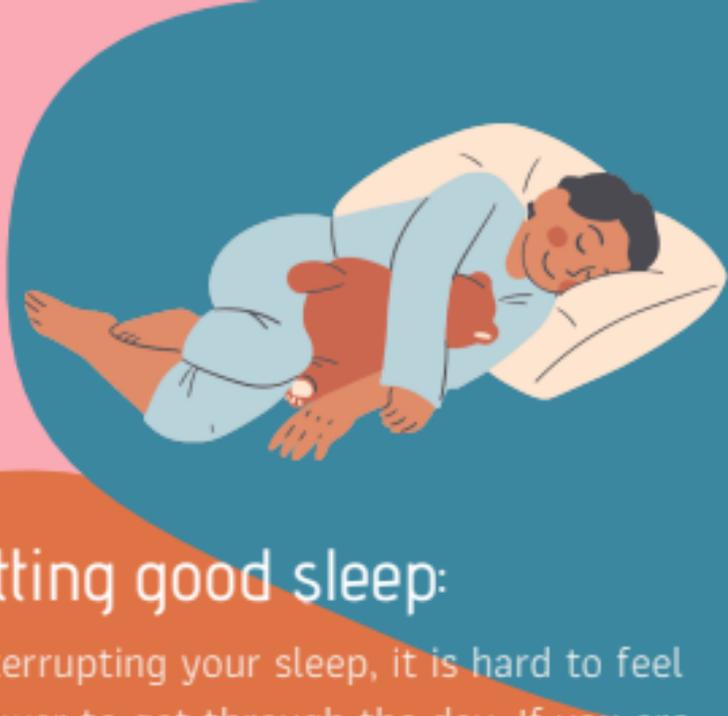
Our favourite mindful activities

that you can do
with your baby



Sleep

Sleeping gives our brains a chance to process your day, and do a 'clean, sort, and sweep'. If we are sleep deprived, it can impact your mood, energy levels, and concentration.



Barriers to getting good sleep:

Of course, when you have a baby interrupting your sleep, it is hard to feel well rested and to have the brain power to get through the day. If you are also struggling with anxiety or over-thinking at bedtime, your body tells your brain that it is not safe to go to sleep right now. Over time this can shift your body's circadian rhythm to the point that you can't get to sleep - even when your brain is calm!

Tips to improve your sleep

How do we improve sleep when the part of our brain in control of it doesn't listen to us?

SLEEP TIMES

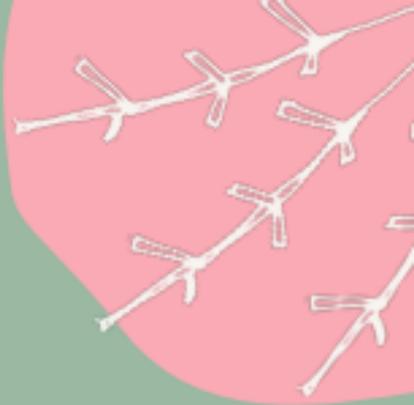
If possible, stick to predictable sleep and wake times. If you have a newborn, grab sleep when you can or if possible arrange for someone else to look after your baby.

SLEEP PLACES

Use the same place for sleep, and don't do other activities in that spot. Having your baby close to you can make it easier to gently resettle them with less disruption to your sleep at night.

SLEEP STRATEGIES

- Keep a sleep diary.
- Write down your worries and then tell yourself 'not now'
- Use meditation and breathing exercises - these signal to our brain it is safe to sleep
- Prioritise your own needs for sleep and rest, in and around the needs of your baby.





Bonding with your baby

For some parents bonding with your baby comes easily, while it may take longer for others. Don't worry if this is you, it is completely normal but there are also things you can do to build this bond.

What you can try

While there is less research on improving parent-child bonding there are some techniques that may be effective

LULLABIES

Singing lullabies to your baby both during pregnancy and after birth can improve bonding and reduce stress

PLAY

Incorporate playful interacting into your daily routine, and practice focusing on the sound of your baby's laugh or other happy cues

MASSAGE

While support/ training may be needed for full massages, gently rubbing your baby's back or tummy may also have positive effects.

What is grounding?



- Grounding involves turning your attention towards the present moment and away from thoughts, memories, or worries
- It can help people manage the symptoms of trauma and anxiety including flashbacks and panic attacks



Example Activities

HERE ARE SOME EASY
GROUNDING PRACTICES
TO WORK INTO YOUR
EVERYDAY LIFE



- **5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1**

Looking around you and name 5 things you can see, then 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. Repeat this adding more detail for each (e.g. blue pillow -> velvet blue pillow with white stitching)

- **CATEGORIES**

Pick a category and name as many things as you can (e.g. movies, countries, books, tv shows, cereal, cars, etc.). You can add a level to this by naming things that all start with the same letter or end with the same sound

- **SENSATIONS**

Use a shocking sensation and focus on how this feels. This could be putting an ice cube on your skin, chewing a mint, splashing water on your face, use deep pressure (someone lying on top of you or a weighted blanket), or play loud music

Exercise

Exercise is not only good for your physical health and recovery post birth, but it is one of the most powerful tools we have to improve mental health.

If you are unsure about what movement is safe for your body post birth, you can talk to an exercise physiologist, or a pelvic floor physiotherapist.



DANCING

Strap your baby to your chest (you can use a carrier or a wrap) and dance to your favourite music

PREGNANCY INSPIRED

If you still have your pregnancy ball, you can do the exercises your midwife may have given you (e.g. bouncing on the ball) with your baby

WALKING

Babies love being outside and seeing birds and trees. Can you find a place near you to walk with your baby?

COPY YOUR BABY

Once your baby starts moving around you can get on their level and copy their movements. You might be surprised how funny your kid finds this!

GYM

Most gyms are welcoming of babies now, and may have a creche or be happy for you to leave the pram near you while you work out

YOGA

This can be a great way to be in the present moment with your baby. You can find lots of videos on YouTube or go to classes at places like PeachTree

Ways to get active with your baby



Social Connection

While having a new baby can be an incredibly exciting time in a person's life, for many it is also very isolating and challenging. Whilst the initial few weeks post your baby's birth may be full of visits from family and friends to meet the new addition to your family, this can often die off in the months following.

For some people this may mean you need to reach out to your existing networks and ask for support. Other people may need to find new sources of social connection. If you find that you are experiencing high levels of anxiety surrounding leaving your house or socialising, you may need to seek further support from a therapist.



IDEAS TO BUILD SOCIAL CONNECTION

- While mum's groups may seem like the easiest way to make new friends who get your current phase of life, regularly attending classes with your baby can be another great way. Local libraries often run events like Rhyme Time which you can attend for free. Baby swim classes are often free under 4 months. Kanga Training run dance classes for mums and babies.
- Free parenting groups: You may have been referred to one of these through your hospital or Fertility Clinic. If this didn't feel like a great match for you, Breastfeeding Australia, Peachtree, MeetUp and Parenting Australia have resources to find groups. Your GP can be another great way to find local groups. Free parenting groups are often informal ways to meet
- Paid parenting groups: If you want some more structured support or are not eligible for the free groups, you may want to consider paid groups. These can offer food, structured programs, and speakers from various different professions. Local examples of these include Modern Mamas Group, Motherhood Collective, or Making Mama Village. You can find others through Facebook or your GP.

Your first trips outside in the early days



There can be a lot of anxiety involved in leaving the house for the first time following having your baby. A lot of mums find themselves worrying before leaving the house with their baby for the first time, or before going somewhere new.

This can be especially hard if you spent your pregnancy fantasizing about all the places you and baby were going to visit together. This difference between your expectations and the reality of having a baby is often one of the most distressing things for new parents to manage.



SOOTHING BUB

As you get to know your baby you will learn the most effective ways to sooth your unique child. Make sure to bring pacifiers, any cuddly toy or blanket, and a spare bottle if you are not breastfeeding

PACK A BAG

If you can, have a dedicated bag with all your essentials for leaving the house. This means that you can just grab the bag and go without needing to rush around or risk forgetting something essential



Tips for Trips

BREASTFEEDING IN PUBLIC

Even if you don't plan to use it, make sure to bring a cover in case you feel uncomfortable.

If your baby is getting distracted or struggling to latch, family bathrooms or nursing rooms may be an option. You may also want to feed your baby before leaving the house.

PLAN AHEAD

You can call the venue you are visiting to find out what the changing table and nursing options are. This can help you decide on the length and timing of your trip. Sometimes keeping it short can let you get out of the house while reducing stress.

USE CHECKLISTS

For anything that you may not have a duplicate of to leave in your packed bag, print out a checklist or write it on a whiteboard as a reminder for all the extra items you need to collect





Building Effective Communication

Despite what you might think, or might have expected, MOST couples go through a rough time when the baby comes along. It takes a lot of readjusting for you both.

It is normal to find both an increased sense of stress in one another's company, and to find that ways you used to bond and relate to each other might need a shake up



Tips for improved communication



'I' STATEMENTS

Begin with the feeling, then the why, and finish with what you need

ASK, AND LISTEN

Use open-ended questions, designed to inquire more about the problem under discussion

NON-JUDGEMENTAL

Express empathy. Even if you don't agree with what is being said, see if you can appreciate that it feels very real for them



Online Resources



MUM SPACE

PANDA CHAT LINE

**AUSTRALIAN BREASTFEEDING ASSOCIATION
CHAT LINE**

WHAT WERE WE THINKING

**EMHPRAC - A GUIDE TO DIGITAL MENTAL
HEALTH RESOURCES**

TRIPLEP ONLINE

BEYOND BLUE

Thank you for reading!

If you'd like to work on any of these skills further, come see us at Three Little Birds Perinatal Psychology. I can't wait to meet you!

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WWW.THREELITTLEBIRDSPERINATAL.COM



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