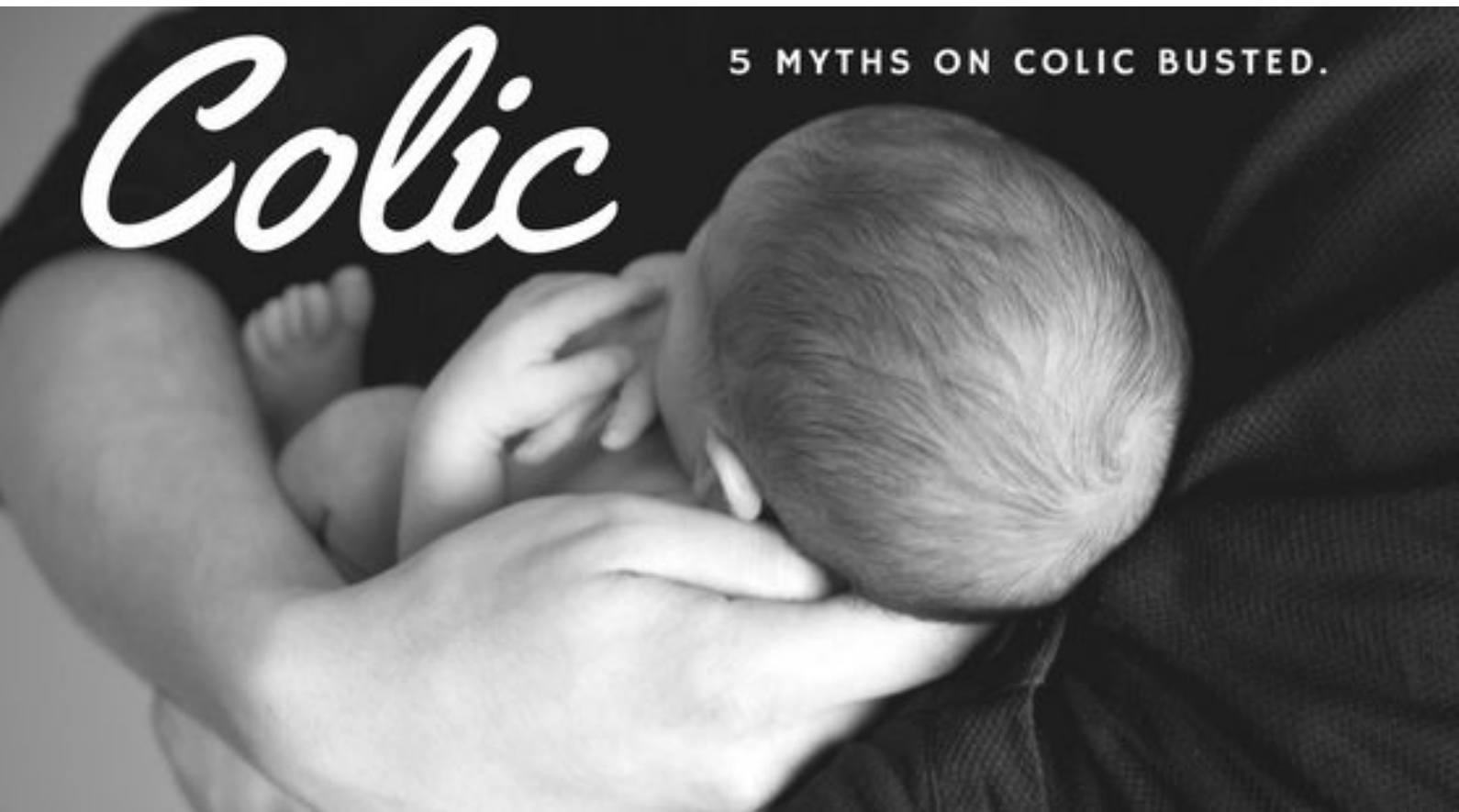




BABY COLIC-FIVE MYTHS BUSTED



Five Myths About Baby Colic Busted

Have you been told your baby has colic or have you googled “my baby won’t stop crying” and the search seems to suggest colic is the culprit? You won’t be alone. Colic is a term that is regularly used to describe unsettled babies, but there is a lot of confusion around what colic actually is, what causes it, what the symptoms are and what you can do.

One thing is for sure, that having a baby with colic is distressing for a baby and hard for parents. Even if you know what colic is before you have your baby or have some experience of friends who have babies who have suffered from it, nothing can quite prepare you for what it feels like to have a colicky baby and the sense of helplessness, frustration and anxiety it can induce. Generally colic is diagnosed if the baby follows the ‘**rule-of-three; colic usually lasts for at least three hours a day, for at least three days a week, for at least three weeks.**’ Having had a baby with colic myself, it can seem like your baby is crying for a lot longer than this.

My experience

My daughter suffered from colic and I felt like a bad mother with a baby that did not “like” me. I did not know what to do and dreaded 4pm onwards which I called “the twilight zone”. From this time, my daughter would become inconsolable and what would follow would be 4-6 hours of me trying to settle and calm her in any way I could whilst she screamed in pain unable to relax. I would breastfeed her until I was sore, pace around the house and try all manner of things to try and help her. I felt her pain and saw her distress and felt like I could not do anything right. The end result was self doubt, exhaustion, worry and dread over the next episode of colic which would follow the next day. As a first time mother, I felt drained, unsupported, confused, and ultimately like I could not meet my baby’s needs. A heady mix of emotions twined with a large dose of hormones lead to me feeling out of control and unable to cope. If this sounds familiar, don’t be surprised as between 5% and 19% of infants develop colic. It is a common experience.

I finally took action by going to an infant massage class which helped me accept and cope with my daughter’s colic, let go of any ideas I was holding that I was doing something “wrong” and give me techniques to help her. It also introduced me to my future career as an infant massage instructor which I love. After a few years of teaching infant massage, I designed, researched and wrote my course the “Soothe, Settle & Sleep” program to help other parents like me who were struggling with coping with colic and experiencing guilt and worry. In understanding more about colic I was able to bust some common myths surrounding it.

Myth One: My baby won’t stop crying because I am doing something wrong

This one often goes through the mind of parents. Why does my baby cry so much and her baby doesn’t? Why can’t I settle my baby? What’s wrong with me? Colic is a condition that affects your baby and is not a reflection on you as a parent. I went on to have two more children, neither of whom had colic and settled very easily. I wish I had known with my daughter that colic was going to be a experience we would need to weather together, to learn from together and to cope with together. I took her colic “personally” rather than accepting it. If you are responding to your baby when he/she cries, offering your baby comfort and security, listening to your baby and communicating love and trust, you are doing the best you can to meet your baby’s needs. Letting go of any guilt and frustration is important as studies have shown that parents exposed to colic are more susceptible to symptoms of postnatal depression. If you have any medical concerns about your baby, never be frightened to consult your doctor to rule out other conditions.

Myth 2: Colic is caused by wind

Sadly the causes of colic are not known. There are many different theories including overstimulation, lactose intolerance, activity during pregnancy such as smoking or an immature gut. Some professionals suggest its caused by birth trauma. It’s not

clear cut which can add to confusion and worry around the condition. It's causes are a mystery and that contributes to why there is no specific remedy. Interesting, there is a lower rate of colic in tribal societies where babies are held more and carrying in slings.

Myth 3: Colic disappears by three months

This can be the case but not always. Sometimes colic can last longer than this and can also be confused with another condition known as silent reflux or GORD. If your baby has colic like symptoms after four months, it is very important to visit your GP to make sure your baby is healthy and there is no other condition present.

Myth 4: There is nothing you can do to manage colic

It can seem like this but there are things you can do and that I would recommend. These include regular tummy massage, holding your baby, using a sling, warm baths, skin to skin, loose swaddling, movement, baby yoga, keeping baby upright and regular winding. Taking action helps you to feel more confident and empowered managing colic. You can find out more on our website. If your baby is distressed, just you being there and offering support in the way that works for you and your baby is vital to reassure him. If you are finding prolonged crying stressful, try using breathing techniques to help relax your nervous system and reduce tension. Adjusting your breathing rate is the simplest way to bring your body into balance if you are feeling stressed. Although it can be hard, acceptance is key. Just accepting that your baby has colic and that the moment will past is also very important in managing stress and anxiety. Try to focus on positive images and moments with your baby. Get support from friends and family, join an infant massage group or get help from a professional. Whenever you get a chance recharge your energy and nurture yourself. Focus on making things easier now.

Myth 5: I got off to a difficult start with my baby and I have lost the chance to bond with him.

It is true that colic can seem to overshadow everything and affect your feelings towards your baby but bonding is a process and not a discreet event. If you feel that you were not able to nurture feelings of love towards your baby for whatever reason, infant massage, skin contact, touch and baby gazing can help you to deepen your connection and let any feelings of frustration and anger go. Bonding can be enhanced at any age and it's never too late. Infant massage has been shown to help with postnatal depression and bonding issues connected with it (Glover, Onozawa & Hodgkinson: 2002; Onozawa, Glover, Adams, Modi & Kumar: 2001).

COLIC SOS PART 1-MAMA MINDSET: HOW TO STOP YOURSELF FROM



FEELING OVERWHELMED

Colic SOS: Let's do this

Struggling with colic or generally feeling a bit “out of control”? I am here to help. This is the first part in a five part series on how to effectively cope with colic or an unsettled baby, feel happier, get your mojo back and learn how to soothe and calm your baby. I will outline five strategies you can use to help you feel more empowered and positive, focusing on the first strategy; **Mama Mindset**.

How do you feel?

I have been doing lots of research into colic, what causes it and how it affects parents and babies. Studies show that parents with colicky babies can feel that colic overshadows the rest of their experience as a new parent. Colic not only affects babies, it affects you and your relationships. Your relationship with your baby can be affected if you feel you are giving all your energy to your baby, receiving nothing but crying in return and you do not feel you have a strong connection. Your relationship with your partner can be affected if your self worth is lowered and you are exhausted. Your relationship with your friends can suffer if you feel no one understands or other mothers seem to have “dream babies”.

The good news is that you can turn things around however difficult they may seem by taking positive action and some steps to change what can seem like an impossible situation at times.

What are you telling yourself?

Negative self talk is a trap we can all fall into. If you are telling yourself that colic is happening because you are a “bad mother” “you can’t meet your baby’s needs” or “you just can’t do this”, that is exactly how parenting will feel to you and this negativity can manifest itself in your actions. What you tell yourself and believe becomes the reality you live in. Let’s turn this around right now. Today say to yourself;

“I am the perfect mummy for my baby”

“I am so happy my baby is here with me”

“I love myself and my baby”

“I am doing the best I can right now”

“As a mother I accept that I am learning everyday”

“By being there for my baby I am giving and receiving love and deepening our bond”

Really say these words with belief and write them out and put them where you can see them. By really believing these affirmations, your mindset will shift and you will be more free of negative overthinking which can drain your energy.

We love these beautiful daily affirmation cards by a [A Life More Inspired](#).

Change your your actions and create a new experience.

Feeling like you are trapped in a cycle of your baby crying can make you feel helpless and disempowered. Many babies with colic have a set time that colic really kicks in. For my baby it was between 4pm-9pm. I used to dread this time and would start to feel anxious as early in the day as lunchtime. All my energy was being sucked into the fear of the afternoon “melt down” period.

An easy way to change your mindset on this is to do things differently during the day. Use action to alter your mood and your experience of events. This can be a challenge to get started as when you feel low, anxious or stressed as your motivation to do things often decreases. Rather than staying in during the time that you feel your baby might be unsettled, try going outside and going for a walk. Change things up and take positive action to avoid negative feelings setting in.

There are also certain activities which can help you feel better;

Socialising—social contact often helps us feel better. You are not alone.

Exercise—this can improve your mood and general health. Gentle yoga or walking is a great way to start.

Rest —try to plan regular rest times. Do not feel guilty! You have regular rests and breaks in a working environment and this is as important when you are at home with a baby. **Having regular rest can help improve your mood and energy levels.**

Time for yourself — make time to relax. You need to nurture yourself.

These things are not unrealistic if you put yourself first and schedule them into your day. They are basic self care strategies which mean that you will be at your best, which in turn affects all your relationships around you.

For inspirational advice on taking this mindset, watch Flow Coach Yves Bachittar on Youtube talking about how you can achieve this.

COLIC SOS PART 2 – ACCEPTANCE: WHY IT'S OKAY TO LET GO AND LET



YOUR BABY TAKE THE LEAD

This is part 2 of five strategies you can use to cope with colic. In part one we talked about mindset and how important it is to not blame yourself if your baby has colic. It's not your fault and you are doing the best you can. Positive thinking and taking time for yourself are crucial to help you find the space and energy to be able to support yourself and your baby in this challenging time.

Accepting big changes

Another key strategy to help you cope with colic is the concept of acceptance. Before you have a baby there is a lot of information given to you about pregnancy and birth, but not so much about what it is like to have a new baby, and even less about colic. Antenatal classes can gloss over the fact that many women are out of hospital after having a baby within 48 hours. This does not give you much of a chance to adjust to this huge life changing event. When a baby is born, so is a mother and this change of

identity can be a struggle for many women and bring up issues of who you are, where you now are, what you think you should be and what it means to have responsibility for another life. Personally I believe that these significant changes cannot even begin to be processed in 48 hours. My children are now almost all teenagers and I still have days where I question my identity as a mother. To expect yourself to embrace this role within a few days when you are often tired puts an unfair expectation on yourself and can affect how you bond with your baby.

Mothering the mother

In 97% of cultures in the world, women have at least 7 days confinement to enable them to rest and recover. In many societies it is even longer, with the community supporting you practically and emotionally. Becoming a mother is an incredible event but one which makes you question many aspects of your life, challenges your own experience of being parented and requires you to trust in your own abilities. Acceptance of change enables you to move through more challenging periods of your life with less resistance and more ease and flow. Having a baby means a new life and a new phase of your life. You may have less freedom than before, you may feel emotions that you were not expecting or understand. The key is to listen to these emotions whether you perceive them as “good” or “bad” and embrace them, love them and learn from them. Whatever the experience you are having, it is there to teach you something, to grow from and expand into new ways of thinking or behaving.

Letting Go Of Resistance

So when dealing with a colicky baby, acceptance is a powerful strategy to help you feel more at peace. The first thing to be aware of is that even if this period seems incredibly hard right now, it will pass. It is unusual for a baby to have colic after six months and it normally subsides after 3 months. By accepting that this is simply a period in your life and that will pass with time, you can let go of the feelings of trying to control what is happening. Letting go of trying to control things is a key strategy in happy parenting. By letting go, you can get to a place of acceptance and enjoyment of the current moment and experience. If you feel a negative emotion, don't be afraid of it, acknowledge it and then let it go. Cry, shout, laugh, whatever you experience let it come and don't be afraid of what it might mean. Begin to understand what triggers

certain feelings and sensations and know that as quickly as one emotion is here, it leaves and another comes. For example the frustration you may have when your baby is unsettled, melts away when he finally sleeps. If your baby is in your arms crying, rather than focusing on getting him to sleep or be settled, try and accept that your baby is just talking to you and telling you what he needs., Focus on the feelings of having him in your arms rather than holding an “end goal” of getting him into bed or to stop crying. Acceptance of emotions is key. Resistance can drain your energy and make you negative.

Letting Go

Acceptance that time may no longer be your own or governed by you is also very important. No one can control time and your baby will definitely have his own pace which may not fit with your schedule. Obviously there will be times when you need to be at certain places at certain times but other than that you may have to accept that you can no longer do some of the things you want to do at the times you want to do them. It does not mean that you won't ever be able to do them in the future, but right now letting those things go means you can focus on being present with your baby. Resistance to change can create emotional and physical blocks creating a sensation of feeling “stuck”. If you let go of the expectation and accept, suddenly life can seem more simple and you feel more positive.

Acceptance and avoiding stress

Acceptance is also important to reduce stress and anxiety, Stress responses in the body originate from the mind. Our sympathetic nervous system or “fight or flight” system is triggered when we perceive a threat. This system is crucial to help us avoid danger but can be over activated when we hold a negative mindset. Your baby crying for example, may cause a stress response in your body, particularly if he has been crying a lot because on a instinctive level you perceive this as your baby being in danger, or pain or stress. A simple exercise to try to change your mindset when your baby is crying is;

To accept that this is happening;

To accept that this is just your baby talking to you

To accept it will pass

To accept that the emotion you feel when your baby is crying is showing you what you need to let go of, be that resistance, control, anger or frustration.

Tuning into your baby and meeting his needs by picking him up and offering a cuddle can help to activate the relaxation systems in both your bodies. It is an easy way for you both to feel less anxiety and stress.

Be fearless with your emotions

It is important to acknowledge all emotions. People tend to share happy experiences but shy away from negative or sad ones. All emotions are valid and you should feel free to experience them and share them without fear of judgement. Being vulnerable enables you to be free of the pain of holding in emotions. Holding your baby, getting a cuddle from a friend or meeting up with other mums at a baby massage class can help you to change your perception of a situation from a threat to an experience. When you change your mindset on what is a threatening situation, the stress response in your body will be less sensitive to that event, reframe it and you can reduce the physical and emotional symptoms of stress. Maybe it sounds too easy but that is how our stress system works. Remove the perception of a threat and avoid stress responses in the body. To cultivate this mindset, meditation, self care and connection are crucial. Accept help from others, accept that you are doing an amazing job as a mother and accept that having a baby will have highs and lows but all experiences teach us something.

COLIC SOS PART 3 – WHY ROCKING AND JIGGLING YOUR BABY WON'T CALM HER DOWN



Gentle Techniques To Help You Ease Colic & Feel Empowered

One of the worst feelings about having a baby with colic is the feeling of helplessness, of not being able to support your baby, of seeing your baby in pain and discomfort.

As a parent you are hard wired to protect and soothe your baby, so when you can't do this it activates your stress response and makes you feel anxious and tense. Throw into the mix that you may be sleep deprived, this is a heady mix which can send you into a negative spiral. In a desperate attempts to find a solution you may end up taking everyone's advice, trying everything and feeling like nothing is working.

How to teach your baby to self soothe & regulate

Skin to skin contact can soothe and calm your baby very quickly. It's under used in the West, largely focusing on premature babies and kangaroo care, but it is essential for your baby's physical and emotional development. Stress and pain can cause your baby to feel disorganised and overstimulated. If your baby is stressed, the best way to soothe her is to tune into her parasympathetic (or calming) nervous system to help her self regulate and soothe. When your baby is stressed, her body can lose vital energy and calories in crying. It can even cause less oxygen in the blood to reach the brain (Bergman) Calming touch can help to centre and calm her. This simple approach is the opposite of what we often do which is jiggle or rock babies when they are distressed. This can cause further overstimulation and distress. Instead;

Cup one hand around your baby head and one around her feet to contain her.

Flex her legs and bring her hand or fist next to her mouth.

Offer loving still touch (gently placing your hands on your baby's body for 5 seconds) to help your baby relax and to start the flow of oxytocin which can help to calm you and your baby.

You have the answer

There are many techniques you can use to help to support your baby. These techniques are not magic, they are not mine, they are all yours. If you take a step back from the situation and tune into your heart, emotions and instincts, the answer on how to respond to your baby is there. It's not your best friend's technique, or your mum's. It's what your inner voice is telling you. If you find it hard to hear your inner voice or anything other than your baby crying, make sure you take a few minutes to yourself and to centre and ground. Imagine how you would want someone to respond to you if you were in need, distressed and in pain. Babies are no different from any

other human on the planet. They respond to their environment and the interaction within it. Babies need us to help them adjust from the womb to the world. We are their caregivers and life keepers.

Trust your instincts.

Massage and yoga techniques from 4 weeks

When your baby is 4 weeks old you can think about introducing massage and yoga to help to stimulate your baby's nervous system, support her digestive system and deeper your bond. You can use an organic sunflower seed oil to massage once you have done a patch test on your baby's skin. The video below gives you "Three Steps To Settling Success". Remember all strokes are suggestions. The best massage is always the one created by you and your baby.

For more help on colic, take a look at our **online course the Soothe Settle & Sleep Program** which contains expert advice on how to soothe your baby gently.

COLIC SOS PART 4-WHY YOU NEED TO PUT YOURSELF FIRST



SELF CARE STRATEGIES

Having a baby with colic can be exhausting, the end result being that you feel you have no energy to give to anyone, let alone yourself.

It's a dangerous game to be playing; no sleep, no down time, grabbing food here and there. This often leads to overthinking and a sense of overwhelm. I think overwhelm is one of the worst feelings. It has frustration, dissatisfaction and hopelessness all attached to it. It can feel like you are in a black hole you can't get out of. You can also feel resentful and start to blame people around you for the world you have created for

yourself due to your mind and body being pushed to the max. There is also the age old excuse that “you can’t change things” or have down time because “you need to be there for your baby”. You may start to think that by not being able to cope with all these different demands, you are in some way less than a “supermum”. You feel you are a failure and start to blame yourself. This can start a negative spiral which then makes coping with your baby’s colic harder.

So what’s the answer?

STOP

Yes stop. Don’t read any more books on what to do, stop googling, don’t take advice and don’t overthink.

Reboot your system and to remind yourself what an amazing human being and mummy you really are. Sit in silence and come up with your own answers. These will be the best ones. When things feel tough, accept they are tough. Acknowledge you feelings and don’t hide from them. It’s okay to not be okay. Babies cry. Babies have colic. You are not to blame and you are not a bad person. This is not happening just to you, but to you and your baby and one of you has to be fully charged and ready to respond and it kinda has to be you! All your baby wants you to do is respond to his need to be close to you so when he cries, pick him up, give him cuddles, do a gentle foot massage or rub his tummy. To be open to his needs, you need to give to yourself first.

What next?

When you have stopped, taken a moment, write down three things you can do for yourself to make you feel better. These are 3 things are specific to you and things that you know will make you feel good.

Here are some suggestions;

1. Schedule sleep in your day-Anything is good.
2. Join a group-get a tribe to help you. You are not the only one
3. Get out-Fresh air and getting outside naturally refreshes.
4. Let people bring you food-Food is your fuel. Ask for some home delivery.
5. Exercise-Stretch, dance and move. Put on your favourite tune now and mix it up a little bit.

Why is this so important?

It is vitally important because you are the most important person in your baby's life and your frame of mind, emotional state and physical condition will impact your interactions with your baby. You are your baby's first teacher so if you are feeling wobbly, your baby will pick up on this. Take time away from your baby to centre yourself and then return to respond to his/her needs. Ask friends and family to help. They will be keen to support you. They love you and your baby.

The best gift you can give your baby is to be fully present and the most happy version of yourself. Invest in yourself and both you and your baby will be happier. Take the easy option. Stop. Tune In. Give yourself some love.

COLIC SOS PART 5- DON'T STRUGGLE ALONE. FIND THE PATH TO YOUR VILLAGE.



The expression “It takes a whole village to raise a child” is one I completely believe to be true.

In my work in Malawi teaching infant massage, I have seen how women work together to support each other after birth; sharing practical tasks and chores, helping with childcare and even nursing each other's babies. Despite hard poverty, the presence of a supportive collective of women makes life more manageable and is a key aspect of community life. Women have a period of confinement after birth to enable them to recover and return to their former strength. Babies are generally happy and contented and crying babies are not common as women respond to their

babies needs immediately. The case in the West is generally the opposite as we tend promote the “individual” over the “collective” and we feel there is some kind of reward in being “independent” as soon as possible. This is the case for new mothers and babies as much parenting advice is around getting your baby to self soothe and regulate in a separate space to you. Although this may be a practical goal for many new mothers, this goes against many of a baby’s instincts who is designed to be in close proximity to his/her carer.

I would argue that new mothers must be supported and nurtured in order to support and nurture their babies. If they do not receive help, overwhelm and self doubt can set in. Dr Allen Schore (2002) says;

“A child’s first relationship, the one with his mother, acts as a template that permanently moulds the individual’s capacity to enter into all later emotional relationships”

Surely this means therefore, that as a society we should be supporting new mothers as much as possible so they can be emotional available and confident in their capacity as a parent. If mothers are children’s first teachers, we must support mothers as much as we can so they feel confident and empowered. Having a baby with colic is particularly challenging for new parents as babies cry for long periods and are difficult to settle. Having a break, being valued and supported is crucial to the emotional and mental health of a parent. Without rest and reassurance, there is a danger that a new parent will run out of patience and energy for their baby which can affect bonding and their relationship with their baby for the long term. The last thing a baby needs is for his/her parent to withdraw.

Finding your village

So how can you find your tribe? Family and friends are the obvious place to begin but sometimes this does not feel right or it’s too close to home. If you are adjusting to a new identity as a mother, you may feel conflicted in your relationship with your friends as you are not quite sure of yourself and how these relationships will evolve. There are some fantastic support groups online and locally, and we have listed some below for you. What is most important is to not be afraid to ask for help. The struggle is real when you have a baby with colic. Don’t think you are imagining it. Help and rest are vital. Here are some pathways to your “village”;

Family Lives An organisation providing immediate help from volunteer parent support workers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Helpline: 0808 800 2222

National Childbirth Trust (NCT) is the largest UK charity for parents, giving accurate, impartial antenatal information and can introduce you to a network of local parents to gain practical and emotional support.

Mumsnet gives information and advice for parents, including news articles, forums and blogs.

Children's Centres in your local area can support you through classes for you and your baby to attend.

How can we help

Studies have shown that infant massage can help you to reduce any feelings of disconnect with your baby as a result of coping with colic and crying. Touch can help you feel closer to your baby if you are finding things hard. Our local classes offer help, support and community. You are not alone and other parents stories help to “normalise” what you are experiencing. Infant massage and touch is so important for helping you feel attuned to your baby. I believe it's a must for every new parent and baby.

The practice of infant massage provides the opportunity for parents to tune into their babies, communicate love and security and read their cues enables the crucial competent of bonding and and infant's understanding of action/reaction and the foundations of empathy. The activation of the serve-and-return wiring in the brain, provide the basis of healthy brain architecture: particularly in relation to life-long mental well-being, empathy, emotional regulation, and cognitive skills (Feldman, Rosenthal & Eidelman, 2014; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; World Health Organisation, 2004).

To find out more about how to learn how to soothe your baby with colic through infant massage online, visit our website and take a look at our **Soothe Settle & Sleep online program**. or find a local teacher **online**.

I hope you have found this five part series on how to cope with colic useful. Check out the other parts in our blog and do share with anyone who might need help.

Remember Love Creates Love so reach out and help someone who needs support if this has inspired you.

For more information on how baby massage can help colic, visit our website www.blossomandberry.com