



Dealing with Guilt & Keeping Your Sanity

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The long pregnancy is over and you've survived labor, but you quickly realize your baby is a handful that doesn't come with instructions — and being a new mom isn't exactly like you pictured it. Of course, you are thrilled with your adorable baby... but you're really tired too!

I'm right there with you. A few days after my baby was born I felt exhausted from labor, the endless feedings and diaper changes. Breastfeeding was more challenging than I imagined. But I also felt an emotional high — my beautiful new baby was finally here!

There's no doubt that I love my baby, but once I was home after his birth I felt a rollercoaster of emotions. I felt unsure and unprepared for the journey ahead. On any given day I might feel joy, frustration, and exhaustion — and let's not forget the guilt! New motherhood has not turned out the way I thought, and I often feel guilty about wanting alone time or not being

affectionate enough toward my partner. It helps to know now that my mood swings were partly due to the sudden hormone changes after my baby's birth.

If you are like me, many of your feelings may come from your inner worries, which can lead you to feel "down" or "blue." Feelings of guilt and the need for support are normal and common, especially for first-time moms. However, if you begin to feel depressed and uninterested in caring for yourself or your baby, this could be a sign of postpartum depression — talk to your doctor.



WAYS TO KEEP YOUR SANITY

- 1 Ask for help.** It's not always easy to ask family, friends or your partner for help or to tell them how you feel. But, talking to them and getting their help can reduce your stress and anxiety. Consider joining a new mommy group in your community; talking to other women going through the same things can help you better know what to expect.
- 2 Don't be so hard on yourself.** Every new parent wants to keep their new baby safe and healthy, but we all make mistakes and things don't always go like we planned. Everyone has different ideas about how to best care for their babies — from feeding and vaccinations to teething and potty training. What you decide may be different from what your friends/family would do but it's your (and your partner's) choice to make.
- 3 Get rest!** Every veteran mom will tell you to sleep when the baby does, and this is golden advice. It will be hard to rest when your little guy is down for a nap because you will want to take this time to catch up on things. But, rest will help you think more clearly, so take naps when you can.
- 4 Know the signs of postpartum depression.** If your baby blues doesn't go away or you feel sad or depressed for more than a few weeks, talk to your doctor about these feelings. You may have postpartum depression (PPD).
- 5 Don't forget to take care of yourself.** Set aside time each day for yourself. This could be as little as a few minutes or a few hours to do something you enjoy, like taking a walk; or find relaxing like taking a long shower, calling a friend or watching a favorite TV show.
- 6 Eat well and stay hydrated.** Did you know eating well can improve your mood and help you think clearly? Make a list of foods/meals you'd like to have available each week. Set aside time to shop and cook or have your partner/friends/family help you. Drink plenty of water, especially if you are breastfeeding.
- 7 Get help for breastfeeding problems.** Talk to your baby's pediatrician, WIC peer counselor and/or a lactation consultant. The sooner you get help with breastfeeding issues the happier you and your baby will be.
- 8 Take a walk.** Moving your body and getting some fresh air can give you an energy boost and make you feel happier.



Soon, you will look back on these early days as a new mom with pride and beam with joy at each of your baby's milestones. It isn't always easy, but you can do it! 🌟