

Bright Start UpDate

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Tips for a Healthy Transition to Parenting

Few things change life like the birth of a child. The transition to being a parent is one of the most significant life events that you will experience.

The transition brings common stresses. However, research suggests that some are more challenging to women, while others are more challenging to men.

For men, the top transition issues tend to include:

- Financially providing for the family
- Lack of sleep or tiredness
- Increased chores and housework
- Intrusive in-laws
- Loss of free time for self and social activities
- Decline in spouse's sexual interest
- Couple disagreements about roles

For women, top transition issues tend to include:

- Lack of sleep and tiredness
- Personal doubts about parental competence or skills
- Unpredictable shifts in mood and anxiety
- Changes in body figure
- Dissatisfaction with personal appearance



Few things change life like the birth of a child

- Increased chores and housework
- Individual stress about roles and responsibilities
- Change in work situation

Take time to discuss the transition issues that concern you and find ways to give and to get support from one another. Some key concerns parents encounter and a few strategies to cope include:

Housework and Child

Care—While parents do expect a baby to create more work, one mother suggested the reality is like the difference between “watching a tornado on TV and having one actually blow the roof off your house.” A key strategy for managing this transition is talking about expectations. Whether parenting in partnership or alone, make a list of specific tasks (laundry,

feeding, bedtime, getting up at night, diapers, etc).

Discuss how you feel about doing each task; then discuss who will be responsible. If a single parent, make another list of where to find support. Focus on making your child's life safe and positive. Avoid being resentful or keeping score of who does what chore.

Money Worries—Men may become more focused on making ends meet while women may become more focused on using money to enhance baby's well-being. Work to understand the other parent's thinking and manage your differences in a healthy way. Create a specific family budget adding new “baby” costs. Seek financial counseling or classes on budgeting.

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Relationship Difficulties—No relationship goes unaffected by a child's birth. Couples may feel less connected. Tiredness, separate activities, and need for support contribute to this feeling. Mothers often spend so much time and attention on a baby that little is left for others. Make sure others feel included. Men may need to take more time to become emotionally involved— through play, rocking, feeding or just providing support to mom.

Career and Work Issues— Nearly 70 percent of mothers

hold part-or full-time employment. This leads to higher expectations of role sharing and career explorations. Discuss and plan for the family's future; focus on family goals rather than individual desires; move from a "me" mentality to "we" as you create new family patterns.

Social Activities—Usually outside social activities decline after a child's birth. Both married and single parents worry about leaving a child with someone else. Parents at home with the child may feel cut off, wishing for adult conversation.

Find opportunities to "get out" that may include walks, picnics or even invite others to join you for at-home movies. Communicate feelings about handling your changed social life.

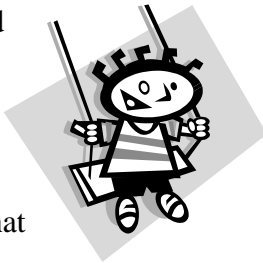
The transition to parenthood brings both joys and stresses. To make that healthy transition, ***find support, give support—and enjoy the adventure.***

Prepared by Linda Burg, Extension Educator/Family and Consumer Sciences, Beadle County, South Dakota State University

Sources: Bright Beginnings, "The Transition from Partners to Parents," October, 2004. NDSU Extension Service, Sean Brotherson, Family Science Specialist, www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/famsci/fs604w.htm

From a Parent's Perspective – The Difference Between Fathers & Mothers

"How lucky am I to have such a hands-on father for my son?" I keep asking myself this question as I cringe and squeeze my eyes shut while watching my husband pushing our little boy, faster and faster, higher and higher on the swing. It takes a lot to hold back my cries of "Slow down!" or "Be careful with him!" It is rather apparent that my husband's parenting methods are different than mine.



As our son is becoming more mobile, I have really started to notice the difference in how we each interact with him and I have questioned which one of us is right? My husband roughhouses, wrestles and

chases our son, while I tend to sit on the floor playing quietly with him. My husband comes home from work just as our son is going down for a nap and riles him up, while I am a stickler for routine and believe that he needs to nap...now!

Many fathers encourage children to take chances and push limits. At the park, fathers are often observed encouraging their kids to keep going when they are close to the top of the jungle gym, while mothers may be on the sidelines warning their kids to be careful.

While we sometimes disagree on what method is best, there are strengths in both of our approaches to parenting. It is the extreme of either approach that can be unhealthy. One approach can tend toward risk

without considering the consequences. The other tends to avoid risk, which may inhibit a child's independence, confidence and progress. Joined together, they keep each other in balance and help children remain safe while expanding their experiences and confidence.

Fathers are not like mothers in the way they "parent". . . . but together they make a great team. Children can – and do – develop well when reared by only a mom or a dad, but lucky is the child who grows up with both parents in his life.

Prepared by Amanda Larson, Extension Educator/Family and Consumer Sciences, BonHomme County, South Dakota State University

Source: "Fathers Matter to Children" Parenting the Preschooler, University of Wisconsin Extension at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/pp/>

Family Meal Time – Children and Food Preparation

Learning opportunities for children surround us in everyday tasks.

Teaching your young child simple food preparation and mealtime practices can be the source of learning exciting new things.

Involvement in meal preparation and serving also encourages children to try variety of foods! Here are some things a young child can do to learn in the kitchen:

- Wipe table tops
- Set the table
- Snap green beans
- Move pre-measured ingredients from one place to another
- Wrap potatoes in foil



- Using small containers, pour small amounts of liquid
- Mix ingredients with a spoon
- Knead yeast breads
- Shake liquids

Seeds & Trees (Broccoli Salad)

- 1 tbsp. sesame seeds
- 1 lb. broccoli after peeling stems
- 3 tbsp. orange juice
- 1 tbsp. sesame oil
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
- ½ tsp. ginger powder

Cook sesame seeds in small pan over medium heat for 3 minutes,

shaking pan occasionally. Cut broccoli into florets. Peel stalks and slice diagonally. Steam broccoli for 4-5 minutes or until tender crisp. Combine orange juice, oil, soy sauce, and ginger and toss with broccoli. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve immediately or chill. Makes 6 servings.

Prepared by Leah Burnison, Extension Educator/Family and Consumer Sciences, Union County, South Dakota State University

Source: SD Physical Activities and Healthy Snacks for Young Children by SD Department of Education using Team Nutrition Funds

Healthy Baby – Handwashing to Stay Healthy

During the summer, toddlers and small children love to play outside. Infants enjoy the outdoors too, as it offers many new sights, textures, smells, and sounds. Outdoor play provides new learning opportunities for children, allows them to explore nature, and gives them a chance to play with pets and animals. However, it is important to be aware of all of the germs and bacteria children can pick up while outside. Washing your child's hands after being outdoors is a simple way to keep kids healthy during summertime!

Why Hand-washing is Important

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found that more than one-third of the outbreaks of food borne illness across the United States are due to not washing hands. Since viruses or bacteria can easily be carried on hands, we must be careful to wash them frequently and well. Bacteria such as *Staphylococcus* and *Escherichia coli* 0157:H7 (E. coli) can frequently be found on children's hands, and are known to cause illness.

When to Wash:

After:

- Touching animals or pets
- Using the restroom
- Removing soiled clothes or shoes
- Coughing or sneezing

Before:

- Eating
- Preparing foods



Hand Washing Directions:

1. Wet hands with water and apply soap.
2. Rub hands together for 20 seconds to make a lather.
3. Rinse hands thoroughly with water.
4. Dry on a clean paper towel.
5. Use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Don't Spread Bacteria:

- If you live on a farm or own a pet, keep food, drinks and toys out of the animal area.
- Do not allow your child to share food with animals.
- Never allow small children to put objects in their mouths that have been on the ground or around pets.
- Always supervise children when they are washing their hands to make sure all of the bacteria are washed away.

Going outside is a fun way to interact with your child in the summertime, and an important part of the learning process for infants and small children. Just remember to be safe and healthy by washing your child's hands frequently!

Prepared by Julia Konstant, Extension Dietetic Nutrition Assistant, Codington County, South Dakota State University

Sources: University of Idaho Extension Service. <http://www.agls.uidaho.edu/germcity/docs/Fair%20Handout%20for%20adults.pdf> South Dakota State University. *Staying Healthy Around Animals!* May 2008 *The ABC's of Hand Washing*. USDA Food and Nutrition Service. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/Nibbles/a.bc.pdf>

Books and Baby – Singing – A Tool to Language Development

What could be more exciting than hearing your child's first word? As that first word grows into a sentence and later into conversation, you are watching a miracle – the miracle of language development. When you take time to listen, talk, read, sing and play games with your child, you help teach important language skills that last a lifetime.

Scientists believe that language is acquired most easily during the first ten years of life. During this time, the circuits in a child's brain become wired for how her own language sounds. An infant's repeated exposure to words clearly helps the brain build the connections that will enable learning more words later on.

Children learn any language best in the meaningful, day-to-day

interactions with adults and other children who speak language. Surround them with language. Maintain an ongoing conversation about what you and they are doing. Read stories from a variety of sources. Recite rhythms, even in the first days and weeks of life. Singing to children will also encourage language development.

Sing as you work. Sing songs you know or make up new ones. The easiest way to make up a new song is to sing new words to familiar tunes. Use the tune of "Farmer in the Dell" to create a song when picking up toys. For example, "Mary picks up the toys, Mary picks up the toys; Heigh ho the derry oh, Mary picks up toys." Add different actions as you go along.

Sing songs in a quiet voice when you want a child to feel relaxed, as riding in the car, waiting in line or preparing for bedtime.

You can also sing along with recorded music. Children's artists have recorded many songs that are appealing to young children. Check with your local library to see what is available. As children get older, they will become familiar with popular songs on the radio. Encourage them to sing along when they come on.

Don't be concerned about singing in the right key. Remember, singing is a fun way of encouraging your child's language development.

Prepared by Deb Sundem, Extension Educator/Family and Consumer Sciences, Codington County, South Dakota State University

Sources:

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service. *Boosting Your Child's Language Development*.

Dr. Karen DeBord. *The Learning Patterns and Needs of Infants and Toddlers*. North Carolina State University. 1999.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension. *Brain Development*. 2008.

The **Bright Start UpDate** is a monthly publication for South Dakota parents with young children under the age of five. It is brought to you as part of Governor Rounds Bright Start Program, an early childhood initiative with a number of different programs. **Bright Start UpDate** is published by the Office of the Governor 4,470 copies of this publication were printed at a cost of \$.46 per copy. You are welcome to make copies and distribute as needed. You can reach us by calling 1-800-305-3064 or check our web site at: <http://www.sdbrightstart.com>

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