

How Do You Feel About Being a Dad?

Having a baby is a big deal. You might be happy, afraid, confused, concerned — or all of these things (and more) at the same time.

Here is a short list of things new dads worry about:

- Will I be able to pay for everything my baby needs?
- How can I help my baby learn?
- Am I ready to be a dad? I haven't done everything I planned to do.
- What kind of dad am I going to be?
- Will I be able to tell what my baby needs?
- If I talk about what scares me, will my partner think I am not committed to our new family?
- How is my life going to change? Will things be different between my partner and me?
- How can I help my partner throughout the pregnancy?



Relax. It is normal to have worries when you learn that you are going to be a new parent. Your partner likely has the same worries and some of her own. Talking to each other will help you both start developing your game plan for parenthood.

Parenting Together

Families form in many different ways. You and your child's mother may be married. You may be in a committed relationship, at the beginning of a relationship or no longer together romantically. No matter your relationship status, you and your child's mother can be excellent parents to your new baby by creating a strong and healthy co-parenting relationship. This publication will refer to the mother of your baby as your partner. Even if you and mom are not romantic partners, you can and should be involved from pregnancy to birth and throughout your child's life.

Co-parenting is when two parents actively work together to raise their child. The way that the two of you interact with each other will influence your child's emotional, physical and social well-being from early childhood into adulthood.

Healthy and open communication is important in any relationship. Below are some tips to help you and your partner develop a positive and effective co-parenting relationship. Please also refer to the Resources section for the "Co-parenting Roles and Responsibilities" worksheet to help you get the conversation started.

Keys to Successful Co-Parenting:

- Open communication! Share parenting information with your partner consistently, accurately and on a timely basis.
- Discuss and agree on parenting time schedules.
- Discuss and agree on financial responsibilities.
- Keep household rules, schedules and behavioral boundaries consistent.
- Speak positively about your partner around your child(ren).
- Discuss and agree on discipline styles.
- Keep parenting styles consistent. Don't purposely try to "outshine" your partner.
- Discuss what roles extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) will play in raising your child.
- Understand that co-parenting takes practice; sometimes it will be easy, other times it will be hard.
- Find a way to compromise.

Dad's Guide to Fatherhood

Reference:

Texas Office of the Attorney General. (2019). Dad's guide to fatherhood. Texas Health and Human Services. <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/child-support/Publications/13-06-15131DadsGuidetoFatherhood-ACC.pdf>