



Self Care + Support Plan

Because it's Motherhood, not Martyrdom.

Overview & Purpose

Mama, you're in for some big changes! Which is so exciting! I know you're aware that life as you know it will be different once baby arrives, and that the unconditional love this new little one brings to you makes the hard stuff totally worthwhile. The thing is, you won't really know what you're in for until you're in it. A new addition can quickly leave parents, especially moms, in survival mode for everything outside of directly caring for baby. But it doesn't have to be so hard. I truly believe that we don't need to give up the things we enjoy in order to be good, loving, and nurturing mothers. (And that continuing to prioritize what we enjoy actually helps us to be *better* mothers!)

That's why I've created this simple workbook to help you to come up with a personalized plan for taking care of yourself, identify resources in your area to access if you need them, and create your community of support. I encourage you to complete this with your partner or main support person, and have him/her involved in the discussion and planning. (Pro tip: self-care is important to consider for both parents!) Whether this is your first baby or you're adding to the brood, it's always a good idea to consider your support plans for the changes ahead.

Objectives

1. Identify your support people
2. Prioritize self-care
3. Let go of the "should" that isn't serving you
4. Find resources now for easy access later

Identify your Support People



"It takes a village to raise a child."

"Thanks so much, I'll let you know if I need help with anything." - Response to every nonspecific offer to 'help' when a new baby arrives {Reality: never asks for help with anything, gets burnt out}

The amount of time, energy, and effort it takes to care for a baby (or toddler, or young child...) is huge. Identifying your support network is critical to ensure you make time for yourself, so that you can best care for your family and optimize your mental wellbeing. Identify the names of your partner and support people below, and think about whether anyone from out of town will be invited to come help you at any point. Further into the next activity, you'll identify how these people can help more specifically, so you don't fall into the trap of getting no help because you aren't sure what to ask for.

Support People:

Taking Care of YOU

Neglecting the things that make you happy & healthy in order to care for your family is only sustainable for so long before you begin to lose sight of who you are outside of being a parent (and let's face it, you're pretty awesome, your partner and I both say so). Prioritizing self-care helps you to be a better parent, too, and sets the stage for modeling self-care for your child... so it's a win-win. Let's make sure you have a plan to make it happen. We'll start with a simple question: What are you already doing for yourself regularly that you *truly* enjoy? It could be relaxing in a bubble bath, exercising, watching movies, trying new recipes, socializing with friends, taking your dog to the park, etc. The possibilities are endless, and no answer is wrong. Write any/all of these down below.

Next, add to the list the things you do for basic self-care and health. These might seem silly to write down, but they'll be important to prioritize later to help you feel like yourself. Ideas include taking prescribed medications, showering, eating regularly, doing your laundry, etc.

Finally, take some time to discuss: what needs to happen to ensure that the items described above are happening routinely once baby arrives? Be as specific as possible in listing the action you want to prioritize, any support persons you need to help you, when/where/how often you'd like for the action to take place. (Examples: *"In order to prioritize going to a weekly yoga class, I need my partner to be available for caring for baby from 12:30-2:30pm on Sundays"*; or *"In order to prioritize getting enough sleep, I will take up my best friend's offer to care for the baby for a few hours on her day off"*)

Action Item to Prioritize	Support/Helper	How + when I get to do it
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You might also consider assigning specific chores or tasks, such as meal planning, grocery shopping, laundry, etc to specific support people. A "chore chart" can also be helpful, for family and visitors to pitch in when they come by your house (don't feel guilty for asking!). This is a great activity to return to or revise if you find your self-care isn't meeting your needs once baby's arrived, and once again if you're returning to work.

Letting go of “Should”

By prioritizing self-care and ensuring your basic needs are being met, you can learn to recognize and let go of the things you do simply because you feel they “should” be done but not because they truly improve your life or well-being. Your happiness matters more than keeping up with appearances for others’ sake.



Keeping up with everything you feel you “should” be doing can be just plain exhausting. Remember that everything you see your fellow parent friends sharing on social media is being shared *selectively* (and through a pretty filter): the hard stuff of parenthood isn’t always something we see much about while scrolling through our Facebook or Instagram homepages. It’s easy to catch ourselves comparing our families to others. So I’ll say this, and hope you believe me: it’s okay if you don’t have a Pinterest-worthy homemade Halloween costume for your little one, if you’re not jumping right back into a workout routine after your 6-week postpartum visit, or if your spare room hasn’t been dusted in months. What’s *not* okay is feeling like you “should” be doing things that don’t serve YOU.



Take a few moments to make sure none of your prioritized items above make you feel like “should.” There truly is beauty in simplicity, so feel good about scaling back to the things most important to you.

Resources

Although you won't know for certain you'll need to access these recommended resources, they're worth considering now to make your life easier if you do. Ask nearby friends, family, or your obstetric providers for their recommendations and jot down the names and contact information for any of the following types of services you feel might be beneficial post-baby:

Breastfeeding Support (Local La Leche League contact, and/or Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultant, IBCLC):

Community Health Centre:

Healthy Eating resources (e.g. grocery online ordering/delivery services, public health group classes, Registered Dietitian, etc):

New Moms Group or Play Group (check with your local health authority for nearby free/low-cost groups, and register early):

Mental Health support (e.g. Reproductive mental health centre, registered psychologist):

Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist (highly recommended during pregnancy for prevention strategies/exercises, but absolutely crucial postpartum if you experience any organ prolapse, and/or leaking/bulging or heaviness down below post-baby):

Other: