



DEAR NEW DAD,

Welcome to fatherhood! It may have just started to feel real. It is common to feel a bit unclear about your role right now - as baby tends to need mom more. But, dear new dad, you are deeply needed. In fact, you are essential to both mom and baby's physical, mental, and emotional health.

Now is your time to really shine as the provider, protector, comforter and container for your precious family. This is your time to powerfully step into your natural role, with honor and healthy pride. *You get to be their hero!!* And if you show up for them right now the way they need, your entire parenthood and relationship journey will benefit.

Mama is at her most vulnerable - her hormones, body, mind, and soul are healing and recalibrating from the hardest thing she's ever done, and she needs you now more than ever before. She needs you to hold her. Bring her food and water (it takes more calories to make breastmilk than it does to make a baby). She needs you to do the housework without being asked, and to protect her from the people who might want to overstep boundaries. She needs you to provide the support for her to rest and heal slowly without feeling like she has to "bounce back" quickly to avoid guilt or shame (even if self-inflicted). She will actually heal faster if allowed to fully rest for the first month. She might not ask for the help she needs (especially if she is used to having it all together or being the one who helps everyone else), so keep asking and offering - and mostly just tuning your attention to notice what needs to get done.

Check in with her, and ask her how she's really doing - with curiosity and care. Really listen. And share how you are feeling too. This is one great way to stay connected, since connection and intimacy will feel different for a while as you both adjust to a whole new life. It is like a shockwave just hit your relationship, and it going to take some time to recover.

The love and romance hasn't died, as some fear, it is just a different season right now.

In the meantime, bond with your baby while you happily give her breaks to shower or sleep or go to the bathroom alone so she can feel human. Engage in this life-changing process *with* her. This is sacred time to soak up the newness of family together...and you'll never get this precious time back.

Kiss her often. Tell her she's doing a great job. Tell her she's beautiful (because she might not always feel that way right now).

You will be tested in new ways. You might feel like she is not herself - you might miss her, and fear she might never get back to "normal". The truth is, you are both becoming something new and will never be exactly who you were before. It's ok and important to grieve your former life, in order to make room for this big beautiful new one. If she is more anxious, and you wonder what happened to her, if you help her feel less alone in keeping this baby safe and ok, she will likely be able to relax a little and access more levity and joy with you because she'll know you are holding this big weight with her. Your time to shine as a dad will come soon when your baby is more robust and ready for wrestling and swinging around. But for now, just take her concerns seriously while also helping her know it will all be ok.

Be patient. And if you're wondering, intimacy will return with time. Try to find other ways of feeling close right now.

And lastly, make sure to take care of yourself too! Move your body, take breaks, talk to other dads (this is essential), and fill up so you can keep caring for your family. Be trustworthy and consistent. This is a high calling, and you are capable. Blessings dear new father!

Your advocate,
Amirah David, LPC, PMH-C

