



Australian Government



# Keys

to living together

**THEN WE WERE THREE**

BUILDING A STRONGER, HEALTHIER RELATIONSHIP



**Finding  
the time**

*Creating a  
great team*

**Dealing with  
the tough stuff**

PLUS MUCH MORE

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# Welcome

**Our relationships with the people around us have a significant influence on our wellbeing and how we live. For most of us, at any given time there is one special relationship — with a partner or spouse — that affects our lives more than any other. Despite its importance we often don't think about how this central relationship is working or if it can be improved. We hope this magazine will provide you with useful tips, advice and ideas to enhance your relationship.**

Going from a couple to a family with a child is one of the most exciting and important times in your relationship. It is impossible to ignore the fact that your lives are about to be transformed forever. Inside you will find the information to help you develop a set of tools to deal with the changes in your relationship. There are articles and activities on everything from setting expectations and priorities, to developing an agreed parenting approach.





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## Then we were three

**Remember when you had all the time in the world and there was just the two of you? No, of course you don't, you're too tired to remember anything at all, except how little sleep you've had since baby arrived on the scene.**

Take heart, you are not alone. The transition from couple to family is one of life's great milestones and all milestones cause stress, as any bewildered, parent will wearily testify.

Rosalie Pattenden of Centacare Melbourne confirms the arrival of children is a source of tension for couples, as strange as that may seem for such an anticipated event.

"...couples should remember that all change brings with it a certain amount of tension, what is critical is how that change is managed. And the indicators are that couples who can talk about what is happening and how they are feeling will navigate this time successfully."

“  
**Remember, life won't magically go back to the way it was...**  
”

"Couples who can talk about how their relationship is changing will be more in control of the direction it is taking."

- **Talk about how things have changed since the birth.** Make sure you cover both the positive and negative. Think about what you might be able to improve and what can't be changed.
- **Make a list of things you want to change or improve.** Brainstorm ideas on how you can do this. For instance if Dad feels like he isn't involved, think of ways he can help.
- **Make a list of things that can't be changed.** Discuss how you will deal with them. For example, lack of sleep is going to be a fact of life for a while but you could agree to share the night duties. Even if bub is being breast fed, Dad can still get up for the other reasons like nappy changes.
- **Make the changes.** Once you have agreed on what you will do, start doing it. If it helps put the list somewhere you can review it, like on the fridge.
- **Continue to think about your relationship.** As your baby grows and their needs change, so will the pressures on your relationship. Remember life won't magically go back to the way it was but this isn't a bad thing. It simply means you will have to keep working to build a stronger relationship.



# Plan to deal with change

Things we can change	Things we can't change
<p><b>Issue:</b> <i>Dad feels left out</i></p> <p><b>Solutions:</b> <i>Dad and Mum take turn in putting baby down to sleep, Dad to help bath baby</i></p>	<p><b>Issue:</b> <i>Lack of sleep</i></p> <p><b>Things that will help:</b> <i>Dad to get up for nappy changes when possible</i></p>
<p><b>Issue:</b></p> <p><b>Solutions:</b></p>	<p><b>Issue:</b></p> <p><b>Things that will help:</b></p>
<p><b>Issue:</b></p> <p><b>Solutions:</b></p>	<p><b>Issue:</b></p> <p><b>Things that will help:</b></p>
<p><b>Issue:</b></p> <p><b>Solutions:</b></p>	<p><b>Issue:</b></p> <p><b>Things that will help:</b></p>
<p><b>The changes we agree to make are:</b></p>	



## Setting expectations

The decision to have a baby is very exciting, and most couples spend a lot of time talking about what it will be like after they bring the baby home. This is great and is to be encouraged. Talking about what to expect from your life together as a family is an excellent way to build a healthy and happy relationship. It also decreases the risk of any unexpected clashes down the track.

- 1 What type of a birthing process do you plan to have? Will Dad be present?
- 2 Do you plan to breast feed?
- 3 Will you find out the sex of your child or do you want it to be a surprise?
- 4 How will having a baby affect your financial situation?
- 5 Do you have a sufficient level of life and disability insurance to give your family security if you are no longer able to support them financially for any reason?
- 6 Have you and your partner developed a legal will? It's a good idea to think about what you want to happen to your money and assets when you die. The time you take now to sort out your plans and make a will could really help the people you love after you're gone. A legal will can also provide direction on the custody of your child/ren if you both pass away.
- 7 How will your work arrangements be affected? When will you return to work? Will you work full or part-time?
- 8 What type, if any, of childcare will you use?
- 9 How much involvement will you allow from family and friends?
- 10 Who will be responsible for what when caring for the baby? How will you ensure that you are both involved?
- 11 Have you thought about how your own upbringing will effect how you raise your own children?
- 12 What family traditions would you like to continue from your own families? Think about how you will celebrate special events such as Christmas and birthdays.
- 13 What cultural and religious expectations do you have for your family?
- 14 What are your current life and financial goals? How will they change or be affected by the birth of your child?
- 15 Have you considered what you will name your child? Remember to consider both first and family names.
- 16 Do you have any other questions about raising children that you would like answered?



## Time for Relationships



Above is a list of some key topics to talk through with your partner. Chances are you will have touched on at least some of them already, but even if there is one topic you haven't thought of yet the exercise will be worth while.

These questions are designed to be discussion starters; there is no right or wrong answer. Take your time to work through the questions and discover what is right for your family.

There are a number of quizzes and activities throughout this magazine that

will help you think about many of these areas in more detail.

If you have questions or concerns about your relationship that you are not comfortable talking about with your partner, it is important not to ignore them. Talk them through with someone you trust and if something more serious is on your mind like control, violence or trust issues, get help from a professional counsellor. It is important that your relationship is healthy for your own sake and the sake of your family.

## Our priorities

You may also find it useful to get together and develop a list of priorities for your short, medium and long-term goals. Be realistic about what you can

achieve and also consider what you will be willing to sacrifice in order to achieve it.

Short term 1 year	Medium term 5 years	Long term 10 years
Goal: <i>Purchase house or invest</i>	Goal: <i>have another baby or go overseas</i>	Goal: <i>Financial security</i>
Goal:	Goal:	Goal:
Goal:	Goal:	Goal:
Goal:	Goal:	Goal:

In order to help you achieve these goals you may find it useful to develop a budget. For help doing this try the budget planner in the 'talking about difficult stuff' section.



Working Together

## Who does what?

**While it might not be perfect, you probably have some kind of routine or system in place to make sure the bathroom stays mould free and the cupboards have food in them — well most of the time at least. This is all about to change. A new baby demands a new approach, whether you like it or not. Not thinking about how you will deal with every day tasks on top of your baby's demands will not make it easier. After the birth of the baby it is likely that you will both be exhausted so it is best to think about who will do what before hand.**

How? Talk about it. Start by writing down the main household tasks that you do currently and who does what. Now make a list of all the new tasks you will need to tackle. Talk about how

your existing tasks will be affected by the arrival of the baby. Now look at how the baby related tasks could be shared around.

Try not to just give all the baby tasks to Mum. Most Dads actually want to be as hands on as possible. Now is a great time to think about how you can both be involved in the care of your newborn.

Remember, after the birth things are probably going to be different to what you expected, so you may need to make some adjustments to your plan. As your baby gets older their needs will change, so make sure you keep thinking about how you can share the workload. It is important that one of you doesn't feel as though they are doing everything, and it is equally as important that no one feels left out.



# Sorting out who does what

Existing tasks	Who's responsible?	New tasks	Who's responsible?

Working Together



Working Together



Working Together

## Dealing with conflict

**Disagreements are a normal part of any healthy relationship and don't have to be detrimental to it. In fact, if one of you continually gives in, just to keep the peace, it can be much worse. The key is to respect each other, and not to let your emotions take over.**

Chances are when you disagree you will feel very passionately, your emotions are heightened and you may get angry, frustrated or hurt. This is fine, so long as you are able to express your feelings without being destructive. This is not always easy.

When we are really angry or upset, physical and emotional tension builds up and can cloud our judgement. This can make it impossible to get your point across in a rational manner. Listen to your body and recognise your warning signs. If you are starting to raise your voice, your palms are getting sweaty or your pulse is racing it may be a good idea to take a break and agree to have the discussion later. Before you attempt to tackle the topic again together, ask yourself the following questions:

- 1. What am I feeling?**  
Are you feeling angry, hurt, embarrassed, jealous, disappointed or betrayed?
- 2. Why am I feeling this?**  
Identify exactly what has made you feel this way. Is there anything from the past that could be adding to the way you feel?
- 3. What do I want to change?**  
Know what it is that you want to work on. What needs to be resolved from the past or present? What action will you take?
- 4. Who am I really angry at?**  
Is the problem really your partner's doing? Are you partly responsible? It is someone, or something else's fault?
- 5. Is my reaction warranted?**  
Is your reaction suitable to the issue at hand? Consider the possibility that you could be overreacting or under reacting.



This can also be a worthwhile activity if you are thinking of raising something with your partner that you think could cause conflict.

It is a good idea to work out a set of rules that you both agree on for when you disagree. Here are a few ideas:

- **Pick the right time** — Pick a time when you can both give your full concentration. Avoid times when either of you are tired or stressed. Make sure there are no distractions; turn off the TV and take the phone off the hook.
- **Attack the problem** — Keep your discussion focused on the problem, try not to attack each other personally.
- **Stay focused** — Stick to the present, and stay focused on the problem at hand. Don't rehash past mistakes that can't be changed and don't try to tackle every other problem. Address other problems at another time.
- **Reach a conclusion** — Decide on what action to take. You will probably need to compromise, remember you can't win all of the time.

## Develop your own set of rules

### Rules for dealing with conflict

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
Agreed:	Agreed:



Working Together

## Doing what comes naturally (or not)

### How involved are you?

- What was your baby's weight and length at birth?
- What size clothes is your baby currently wearing?
- When will your baby start to teethe?
- How often does your baby feed each day?
- What is your baby's favourite toy?

**Raising children is one of life's greatest challenges, perhaps even its greatest challenge.**

Nothing can totally prepare you for it, but experts agree that both parents have equally important roles to play in raising children.

There are no 'natural' roles for the sexes when it comes to parenting. Women are not necessarily 'better' at parenting than men.

“  
**Parenting is about contact and connection.**  
”





### THINGS DADS CAN DO

- Learn about the pregnancy.
- Spend some one on one time with baby. Play with toys, read to baby or go for a walk. This will also give Mum some time to rest.
- Help with the care of baby; change nappies, bath baby, once bub is old enough help with the feeding.
- Talk to Mum about what she needs, and how you can help.
- Help do some of the day-to-day things your partner doesn't have time to like house keeping, paying the bills and feeding the pets.

### THINGS MUMS CAN DO

- Include your partner in plans right from the start of pregnancy.
- Let your partner know how they can help.
- Talk to your partner and let them know how your baby is changing and developing.
- When you need a break, ask for one. Baby will benefit from time with their Dad.



It is not a matter of chromosomes, no one is hopeless with a baby just because they're a bloke, or all knowing because they have the X chromosome. "No one has superior knowledge built in," says Andrew King, a counsellor with the Sydney-based Uniting Care Burnside.

Parenting is about contact and connection, both of which build confidence in your ability to parent.

For lots of reasons, women tend to have more of the contact especially in the early years, and therefore more of the confidence that comes with handling a baby.

But even with new babies, the father's role should not be underplayed or undervalued. They do a great job if given the chance.

The more involved both of you are, the more connected you will feel to your baby. Research indicates that if both the father and mother are involved right from the beginning they are likely to have stronger relationships with their child/ren.



## A committed unit

**Everyone wants to share in the joy that surrounds a new addition to the family. But what if that is not what you — the new parents — need?**

It is not uncommon to find that when a new baby arrives you want a bit of space to sort yourselves out. Sometimes others just don't understand this, and their enthusiasm and interest, however well meaning, can start to feel like interference.

It's a difficult issue to deal with, especially in those challenging first months. On the one hand, you don't want to hurt the feelings of those who love you. But ultimately you have to decide what is right for your new family. Your family, not the desires of your in-laws, has to be the priority now says Christine Ockenfels of Anglicare, Western Australia.

Together, the two of you have to work out what is in your best interests, the best interests of your baby and how

the grandparents fit in with those priorities, says Christine. And then you have to present a united front to the world based on that decision.

"Grandparents are incredibly important and you want to build on relationships, not damage them. So it might help to say something like:

"We love having you round but it's probably best if you call beforehand."

The thing to remember is that new parents need to be committed to, and firm on, communicating what is right for their new family.

“  
**Your family has to be the priority now...**  
”



### TIPS

- Decide how much involvement you will allow from your family.
- Be open with your family and let them know your wishes.
- If needed, set rules for visitors such as calling beforehand.
- Be firm and always back each other up.



External Influences



External Influences



Parenthood

## Nurture the strongest link

**So you've decided to have children? Congratulations. That's the hard part out of the way. Or is it?**

Unfortunately, it isn't always the case. There is so much to be considered when you plan to have children. And not all your energy should be focused on baby matters. Far from it, say relationship educators.

The here and now is a great time to check-up on the health and strength of your relationship. Because chances are that you might not have the time or energy to do it once that little bundle of joy, with full-on demands, comes into your life.

"You need to be thinking about and taking care of your relationship," says Fiona McDonald, the Manager of Education Services at Relationships Australia, Western Australia.

"You don't want to totally focus on the baby and lose sight of each other." The relationship between the couple has to remain the primary relationship, explains Fiona. It is the one that will sustain the family.

Also couples need to have a strong relationship to cope with the changes a baby, especially a first baby, brings.

And irrespective of your role, be it the breadwinner, the stay at home parent, or a combination of both, there will be days when both parents will be overburdened to the point of exhaustion. But, there are practical decisions that can be made pre-baby to help you deal with what happens post-baby. Things like working out who does what around the house and when, adopting healthy, stress-releasing habits and maintaining common interests. It will pay dividends in terms of your relationship as you move from fully couple to fully fledged family, says Fiona.

Most important of all, keep talking to each other, she says. Keep that dialogue happening.



### TIPS

- Don't focus all your energy on the baby, spend some time thinking about your own relationship.
- Think about who will do what around the house.
- Adopt stress relieving activities like exercise, reading, or listening to music.
- Make time to do things together that you both enjoy.



## Celebrate difference

**Judith watched with horror the first time her precious four-year-old boy climbed a tree in the garden.**

Nothing she could do or say would coax him back down. And to make matters worse her husband, Daniel did not seem concerned. In fact, Judith complained he encouraged their baby, even to the extent of giving him a hand up to the first branch.

Differences of opinions on raising children are to be expected but these differences do need careful consideration if they are not going to get in the way of a happy relationship, says Denise Lacey, Manager of the Marriage and Relationship Education Unit at Centacare Melbourne.

Denise advises couples to look at their own family history for clues to how they feel about being parents. Nearly all differences relate back to how you grew up.

That's what Judith and Daniel did. And through vigorous and frank discussions, Judith realised her knowledge of boys was limited. She had grown up in an all-girl household. When she saw danger, Daniel, who grew up with three brothers, simply saw fun.

Judith and Daniel talked about their differences and Judith conceded that her husband had more knowledge about boys and what they needed. She decided she could let his knowledge influence their parenting decisions.

Their son's smile of triumph when he got to the top of the tree was ample reward for Judith's compromise. The bonus was the tightening of the bonds between her and her son.

If you are and your partner are having difficulty deciding on the best parenting approach, try the activity on the next page.





# Developing an Agreed Parenting Approach

- Step 1.** Identify the issue that you want to resolve.
- Step 2.** List any experiences that you had when you were growing up.
- Step 3.** Work together to decide what experiences were positive and that you might like to use to develop your own approach.
- Step 4.** Identify what experiences were not positive and that you do not want to see used with your children.
- Step 5.** Agree on an approach that is right for your children. Make sure that you are both comfortable with this approach.

<b>Issue:</b>	
<b>His experiences</b>	<b>Her experiences</b>
<b>Knowledge or experiences that you want to use with your own children:</b>	
<b>Knowledge or experiences that you do not want to see used:</b>	
<b>Agreed approach:</b>	



## Take account

**The transition from couple to family does not come cheap. It is fools gold to ignore how your financial situation will change once you fall pregnant. The way you spend and manage money will need to alter. While love might come for free, children certainly do not.**

In fact in 2003 the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at the University of Canberra estimated the cost of raising a single child from birth to twenty years is about \$264,000.00. It might seem scary but it doesn't have to be, you just need to be aware of your spending habits and learn to manage your money effectively.

An investment in your finances will have more rewards than just a healthy bank balance. In fact, Rosalie Pattenden of Centacare Melbourne says research indicates that more than 70 per cent of couples say that money is a problem for them, and they are not just talking about a lack of money. Rosalie says couples are making a sound investment in their future when deciding to sort out their finances.

A great way to keep track of where your money is going is to develop a budget. Doing a budget and having a plan for your money isn't difficult, and it can help you do the things you really want. Use the budget planner on the following two pages to help you work out how much you earn and what you spend it on.





Talking about the Difficult Stuff





## Preparing a budget

Set some time aside to look at the budget planner either together or individually. Start by writing down all of your income and all of your expenses. You'll need to decide whether your budget will be a weekly, fortnightly or monthly guide. Some people like to match their budget to their pay period. Once you come to a decision, make sure all the numbers you write down are for the same period.

When you've worked out your combined income and expenses, you'll be able to see how much regular income you get and where that money goes over your chosen time period. Take away your total expenses from your total income to get your result.

If you decide to keep your finances totally separate you may like to have separate budgets too. Just remember you will still need to make some decisions on who will pay for what and how you will use your budgets to reach your common goals. Just remember you will still need to make some decisions on who will pay for what and how you will use your budgets to reach your common goals.

$$\text{TOTAL INCOME} - \text{TOTAL EXPENSES} = ?$$

\$	\$	\$
----	----	----

Your result will show whether you're spending more than you earn or if you have money left after your expenses to use for other things.

## Income

Work out your regular income.

Type of income	Amount received each period
Salary or wage (after tax)	\$ .....
Pension or Government allowance	\$ .....
Child support or other payments	\$ .....
Regular interest from savings	\$ .....
Regular income from investments (such as rent from an investment property, distributions from a managed fund, or dividends from shares)	\$ .....
Other	\$ .....
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$ .....</b>



## Expenses

Work out your regular expenses. Remember to use the same time frame that you chose for your income. Next, add up the subtotals to get your total expenses.

Household expenses		Education expenses	
Rent	\$ .....	School fees	\$ .....
Repairs	\$ .....	University or TAFE fees	\$ .....
Gas	\$ .....	Tuition	\$ .....
Electricity	\$ .....	Books and uniforms	\$ .....
Water	\$ .....	Camps/excursions	\$ .....
Telephone/mobile	\$ .....	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>\$ .....</b>
Rates	\$ .....	<b>Debt repayments</b>	
Body corporate fees	\$ .....	Mortgage	\$ .....
Internet	\$ .....	Car loan	\$ .....
Cable/TV	\$ .....	HECS or HELP payments	\$ .....
Furniture	\$ .....	Credit cards	\$ .....
Appliances	\$ .....	Personal loans	\$ .....
Groceries	\$ .....	Store cards	\$ .....
Gardening	\$ .....	Lay-bys	\$ .....
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>\$ .....</b>	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>\$ .....</b>

### What do we do with our budget?

Is the result what you were expecting? If you're spending all of your income (or even more), your budget can show the areas where you might be able to change your spending habits. If you need to make a change you might like to sort your expenses into two groups: essentials and extras. Remember you both need to be happy with this budget,

so make sure you can both live with the changes, there is no point having a budget that you won't stick to.

If you have money left over, think about how that money could be used. Getting debt under control is important. Set some goals together, and then work out how your budget will help you reach them.





Transport expenses		Savings	
Car registration	\$ .....	Superannuation contrib.	\$ .....
Parking	\$ .....	Regular savings	\$ .....
Fuel	\$ .....	Regular investments	\$ .....
Repairs/maintenance	\$ .....	<b>Sub total</b>	\$ .....
Public transport	\$ .....	Other expenses	
<b>Sub total</b>	\$ .....	Child care	\$ .....
Medical expenses		Child support payments	\$ .....
Doctor	\$ .....	Gifts	\$ .....
Medicines	\$ .....	Donations	\$ .....
Dentist	\$ .....	Hobbies and sports	\$ .....
<b>Sub total</b>	\$ .....	Subscriptions	\$ .....
Insurance		Newspapers & magazines	\$ .....
Home and contents	\$ .....	Movies & DVDs	\$ .....
Car	\$ .....	Restaurants & takeaway	\$ .....
Health	\$ .....	Alcohol & cigarettes	\$ .....
Income protection	\$ .....	Pet food	\$ .....
Life	\$ .....	Other pet costs	\$ .....
<b>Sub total</b>	\$ .....	.....	\$ .....
		.....	\$ .....
		.....	\$ .....
		.....	\$ .....
		<b>Sub total</b>	\$ .....
		<b>Total expenses</b>	\$ .....

Talking about the Difficult Stuff



Talking about the Difficult Stuff

## Hardest call of all

**There can be no subject more difficult to talk about than infidelity. Most people would like to simply ignore it. It's hard to imagine that it could happen to you, yet the statistics speak for themselves.**

Denise Lacey, Manager of the Marriage and Relationship Education Unit at Centacare Melbourne, says talking about infidelity, and the possibility it could occur, could prevent it.

"Couples need to consider that it can happen to them. But they also need to know that open communication could prevent a potentially disastrous situation," says Denise.

Denise suggests telling your partner if you are attracted to someone or uncomfortable with the way a situation is developing. Difficult to do, but better than the alternative, she says.

“  
**Infidelity is not  
restricted to  
the physical...**  
”





Take for instance Brad who found himself in a situation with a work colleague. Recently the office banter had taken on a new meaning. It was flattering but instinctively Brad knew he was in dangerous territory.

In this kind of a situation, advises Denise, Brad should avoid any extra contact with his colleague and he should talk about what was happening with his partner. It could be the discussion that saves his relationship. Infidelity, says Denise, is not simply restricted to the physical. Partners should be aware when they are over stepping the boundaries when it comes to sharing intimacies of their primary relationship.

“You have to watch out for the risk factors, be aware of them and talk about them. Don’t let the poison of infidelity get into the system. Talking about the possibility of infidelity can be awkward but it is better than losing your family.”

#### TIPS

- Be aware infidelity could happen to you.
- If you are attracted to someone or if you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, talk to your partner about it.
- Avoid any extra contact with the person concerned.
- Don’t share intimate details of your relationship with other people.



Crisis? What Crisis?

## Dealing with the unexpected — a different style

**Dealing with a crisis can be stressful on any relationship, regardless of how close you are or how long you have been together. However, when you decide to share your life with someone you are also making a decision to share not only the good times but also the harder ones.**

Events such as an illness in the family, death of a close friend, or unexpected unemployment can present complex challenges to families. These challenges may seem insurmountable, but in actual fact can strengthen your relationship.

The important thing to remember is that you will both have your own way of dealing with the situation. You shouldn't expect your partner to react in the same way. In fact according to Andrew King from the Sydney-based Uniting Care Burnside, men and women tend to handle problems differently. "Guys are less practiced at talking about their feelings", says Andrew. "But it doesn't mean they love or trust their partner less because they won't talk about their problems."

This will mean that you will need to be understanding with each other. It is important for both of you to recognise how you are feeling. No matter how you deal with things, ignoring your feelings will not make them go away.

Men tend to take a more solutions based approach to problems, so it may be useful to work out together what can be done or how you can help. While women like to talk things through, if this is difficult for you, being willing to listen is a great start. Remember to be gentle with each other, sometimes just knowing you have someone around to give you support, can make all the difference. However if you don't feel like you or your partner is coping, get support. Friends, relatives, counsellors, and doctors can all be a big help in these times.

### TIPS

- Be aware men and women handle problems differently.
- Recognise your feelings, ignoring them won't make them go away.
- If you want to find a solution, work out what can be done in a practical sense.
- If talking about the issue is hard for you, offer to listen.
- Get help from friends, relatives, counsellors or doctors if needed.



## Getting close to the truth

**The birth of a child is never easy. And we are not just referring to the actual birthing process here.**

The changes that occur with the arrival of children cannot be overestimated. Believe it when people tell you your life won't be the same again.

But change, even one as momentous as moving from being a couple to a family with children, does not have to be negative. A lot depends on how you prepare for that change.

Relationship expert, Denise Lacey of Centacare Melbourne says couples need to face the "what ifs" in the months preceding the birth.

One issue couples don't always feel comfortable addressing but worry about, is how their sex life will be affected by becoming parents. Be sure it will, but again, that change does not necessarily have to be negative.

"However much you might wish it otherwise, it will change. Just like everything else in your life." Some first-time mothers can be terribly anxious about the physical consequences of giving birth, says Denise. Her advice again is for the partners to talk about their feelings and fears before the birth. "It will help ally any fears. You don't want any surprises or no go areas." Talking to your doctor or midwife about what to expect can also help.

### TIPS

- Talk to your partner about any fears you may have.
- Get the facts from your doctor or midwife.
- After the birth take your time.
- Planned sex is just as good.
- There is no right time to start having sex again.

After the birth women are often sore and exhausted and wonder if they will ever want sex again. Don't worry this is normal and almost all couples develop a healthy sex life again given time. The key is to take things slowly, and to talk to each other. Remember if sex is painful, uncomfortable or not enjoyable there could be a medical reason, so talk to your doctor.

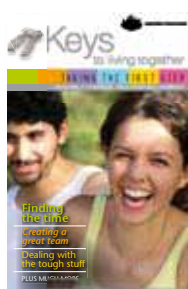
Life in your house is probably going to be pretty hectic, so sex, like everything else may need a little organising. Don't worry; it won't be any less enjoyable for being planned!

Remember there is no right time to start having sex again, every couple is different. It is important to support each other and be patient.

# Notes



## Others in this series



Taking the first step and making a significant commitment to someone you love is one of the most exciting and important times in your relationship. *Keys to Living Together — Taking the first step* includes the information you need to develop your own set of relationship tools.



Creating a new relationship and with it a new family is an exciting and important time, that can often also be very complicated. *Keys to Living Together — Instant families* includes information to help you develop a set of tools to help make the transition a little smoother.

### Other resources in the series

Can't find a *Keys to Living Together* kit that is right for you? We are currently developing kits for more family types and families with other needs.

To find out about these other kits you can check out our website [www.facsia.gov.au/keys](http://www.facsia.gov.au/keys).

## CONTACTS

- **Family Relationship Advice Line**  
1800 050 321 8am–8pm Monday to Friday  
10am–4pm Saturday (not including national public holidays)
- **Family Relationships Online**  
[www.familyrelationships.gov.au](http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au)  
Family Relationships Online can assist people from families affected by relationship or separation issues.
- **Raising Children Network: the Australian parenting website**  
[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)
- **Family Relationship Services Program**  
[www.facsia.gov.au/frsp](http://www.facsia.gov.au/frsp)  
Includes a directory of organisations providing family relationship support services.
- **Financial Literacy Foundation**  
[www.understandingmoney.gov.au](http://www.understandingmoney.gov.au)
- **National Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Helpline**  
1800 200 526

### FOR ADDITIONAL COPIES OR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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PO Box 7788 Canberra Mail Centre ACT 2610  
Telephone 1800 050 009  
(\*free unless calling from a mobile or pay phone)  
TTY: 1800 260 402  
(a telephone typewriter for people with a hearing or speech impairment)  
[www.facsia.gov.au/keys](http://www.facsia.gov.au/keys)

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