

Bringing Baby Home:

A New Set of Family Dynamics

Good planning is key to a smooth transition

How do I describe my feelings and say what I need?

"I" messages can be a healthy way to share your emotions and desires without making the other person feel offended or bad. "I" messages focus on how you feel and why you feel that way. "I" messages have three parts:

- a statement about your feelings ("I get sad...")
- a statement about what the other person did or said ("...when you rock my baby to sleep...")
- the reason for your feelings ("...because I want to spend that time with my baby.")

"I" messages are a good way to start a discussion, avoid conflict, and discover workable solutions to meet you and your baby's needs.



For many families, bringing baby home for the first time can be an exciting moment. Quite a bit of planning goes into this memorable ride home. This may include choosing the outfit your baby will wear, installing a car seat securely for baby's safety, and sending notices to friends and family who will be waiting to see this new little bundle of joy. *But have you thought about how to prepare family members for the arrival of this new person into the family home?* Here are some things to think about as you make the adjustment.

Everything Changes Once baby comes home, you will likely find that your normal routine is disrupted. In meeting your baby's needs and your personal needs, you may find it harder to give equal time to every family member. This may leave other people in the family feeling left out or no longer as important. They may even begin to show feelings of jealousy toward the baby. With open communication and a little teamwork, you can overcome these challenges and bond together as a new family.

Sibling Rivalry When bringing a new baby home, you may find that an older sibling will begin to display feelings of jealousy toward the new baby. The older sibling may not understand that babies require a lot of time and energy. Set aside time alone each day to spend with her, maybe during baby's nap time or during a time when a friend or family member is watching the baby. Use this special time to remind the older sibling that she is important too. Try to involve her in the new baby's care by allowing her to choose outfits for baby to wear, bring you diapers and wipes as needed, and choose accessories from the store for the new baby. Talk about how important it is for everyone to help in taking care of the new baby, and give the older sibling fun things to do for baby. This will help her develop a sense of responsibility for the new baby and help decrease any underlying feelings of jealousy.

Bring Sexy Back Carving out time to spend with your partner may be difficult in the first few weeks and months. However, just as you spend quality time with your infant, remember that your partner needs quality time with you too. Ask friends and family to assist you in watching the baby so you and your partner can reconnect in ways that are special to the both of you. Try not to feel guilty about leaving your baby. You have left her in the care of someone you trust, and spending quality time with your partner is just as important as being a good parent. If going out is not an option, use baby's sleep time to spend time with one another. Also, find opportunities to be together as a new family to strengthen your bonds and create a united front as parents of this new baby.

To Grandmother's House We Go Grandparents can be very beneficial in the life of a new grand baby. Research shows us that grandparents are not only excellent and trustworthy babysitters, but they also may be able to provide economic and other types

of support when needed. In many families, new parents and grandparents both feel enormous pleasure and pride with the new baby and enjoy the new bonds they develop around caring for and playing with the baby. Occasionally, new parents and grandparents may have some conflicting ideas about handling situations such as feeding, crying, sleep times, or other everyday routines. When differences arise on these kinds of issues, do not let this drive a wedge between you and your parents. Instead use this as an opportunity to have frank and respectful communication about these differences and about your preferences as the baby's parents.

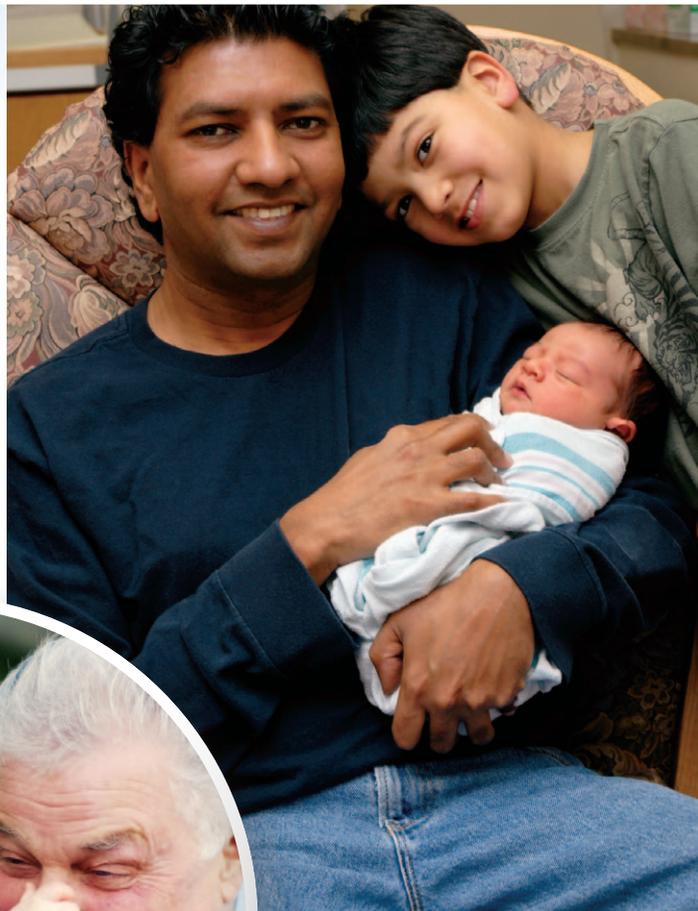
The important thing to remember is that both parents and grandparents want what is best for the new baby. As you transition to the role of parents, your parents may have to adjust to seeing you in your new adult role as well. And, they are learning to adjust to their new role of being grandparents. But don't miss out on the opportunity to listen to and learn from your parents as they may provide useful information and wisdom from their life experience. They can be an important source of help and moral support for you as your child grows.

Aunts, Uncles, and Everyone Else

Other family members may also play a helpful role in the life of your baby, either through sharing resources (money, baby items, clothes or accessories) or providing childcare when needed. Your family may also provide emotional support or instruction in child-rearing practices. Talk about how you want to raise your child. Be open to giving advice as well as taking it. However, while you may share information on how to parent your child, try not to get into a competition with the other parents in your family. Everyone parents their children differently. As long as the child's needs are being met in healthy ways, it is okay if your parenting methods differ. *Establish clear limits and boundaries with your family to avoid feeling smothered or controlled.* For many parents, family (and friends) can provide many benefits for the growing family.

The Bottom Line Bringing baby home may cause chaos and disruption in your normal family routines, leaving existing family members feeling left out or less important. Open communication, understanding and a lot of love will go a long way in making sure everyone bonds together and enjoys spending time with the newest member of your family.

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