

Family Relationships

Introduction

Often when a woman becomes pregnant, she begins experiencing different moods and concentrates on these feelings and on how her body is changing. These changes can make the father feel neglected. He most likely wants to be an important part of your life. He is probably having many concerns about the new baby. All these things can put some strain on your relationship. It is often helpful to talk about the feelings both of you are having about the new baby. Several other helpful things you can do are: bring him with you for some of your prenatal visits, let him feel the baby as it kicks and moves, have him take childbirth classes with you. Sometimes the father does not seem interested in the upcoming baby or even worse, may seem angry. If this is a problem for you, let your doctor know and he or she may be able to give you counseling options or other assistance.

Children, except for very young infants, usually notice that their mom and dad are going through something new. It is important to tell them that a new baby will be coming and explain how they can help take care of the new child. Let little ones practice diaper changing on a doll and let the older ones know how they'll be able to help take care of their new brother or sister. Let your children feel the baby moving and kicking. Hospitals offer classes and tours of the nursery for siblings. They may get jealous because they think your new baby will be more important than they are. Remind them how much you love them and that they are just as important as the new baby.

Fathers & Pregnancy

The pregnant woman experiences the physical changes taking place and is constantly reminded of impending parenthood. Often the man feels like an outsider and has difficulty relating to his changing role. Recently, there has been an increased interest on the part of fathers in the birth experience. There has also been a change in our society's attitude and now men are encouraged in their efforts to experience the pregnancy and childbirth.

The father needs to understand what is happening to the mother of his child, what effect this pregnancy will have on his relationship with her, and what the new baby will mean to both of them. Many men begin to worry about finances. There are the costs for the prenatal care and delivery at the hospital. He may wonder if his salary alone is sufficient if you will no longer work after the baby is born.

Sexual concerns often surface. The father may fear that sexual intercourse will somehow harm the developing child. Conflicting feelings regarding the pregnancy, physical difficulties, and a constant concern over how all this will effect his relationship with you contributes to much frustration. With others, there is a "fear of abandonment," that the child's birth will change his relationship with the you and that perhaps you will no longer love him.

Both parents should discuss their feelings. You must come face to face with what is happening and how it is affecting you so you may make changes accordingly. Men who are well informed and attend childbirth classes to help with the birth of their child, often express their pride in their being there to "give birth." These fathers often have tremendous feelings of importance, seem to be able to more readily accept the role of fathering, and quickly become actively involved in all aspects of their children's care.

When the father views pregnancy as a "growing" experience, he has the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of himself and the mother of his child. This can help make this period in your lives quite satisfying which may help smoothly pave the road into parenthood.

A New Baby & Other Children

The arrival of a new baby is often the first real "crisis" in the life of a young child. There is no "right" time to tell your other children about another child coming. It all depends upon their ages, how long they may need to adjust to the news, and how comfortable you are discussing it with them at that time. It is important to tell them before you go to the hospital and before the baby is born.

Each child will react in his/her own way depending upon how he/she views this "new addition" to the family. Children may feel threatened and react by unlearning behaviors. They return to soiling their clothes, acting helpless or hostile, or speaking baby talk.

It is best to help them view the situation positively. Encourage them to talk about their feelings and some of the changes that may occur in the household with the arrival of the new baby. Allowing your children to help prepare for the new baby is often helpful. Perhaps taking them along on a shopping trip for baby items will help with their understanding and engender positive feelings about the situation. Allow them to help around the house in new and different ways. They will usually appreciate the independence and enjoy their new feeling of importance.

After the baby comes, be sure to set aside time especially for your older children, so they will not feel neglected. Young children need constant reassurance that they are loved.

Several hospitals now allow young children to visit the new baby soon after birth. The existence of "sibling visitation" programs may be a consideration in deciding which medical facility you might like to utilize when your baby is born. Many parents feel that involving the other children early with a new baby promotes family closeness and helps to avoid other possible problems with insecurity, jealousy and rivalry.