

Parenting your newborn can be scary, especially if it's your first child. Here are a few tips to help put your mind at ease.

### **1. Take care of yourself.**

Raising children is hard physically, emotionally and mentally. Looking after yourself, eating healthily and getting adequate sleep and exercise, is vital for the welfare of you and your child.

If time is an issue, include your child in your daily walk or exercise class. On the emotional and mental level, give yourself time for an occasional break. Find a relative, friend or neighbour who will look after your child regularly so you can get away, even if it's only for an hour or two.

### **2. Every child is different.**

Raising children is confusing at first. Sleep patterns, health issues, rate of growth and maturity; you'll hear so many differing opinions on what is supposed to be normal. Remember, there is no normal.

Aspects of your child's looks, character and behaviour combine to create a unique being. Constantly comparing your child to others will lead to stress for both you and your child. Understand and observe basic growth stages and behaviour but for the most part, rejoice in your child's uniqueness.

### **3. Health issues will arise – don't panic!**

Raising children can be nerve-racking. Newborns get spots and rashes, coughs and colds, runny noses and tummies. Skin peels off their hands and feet and, once they're mobile, they

fall and bump themselves or take the occasional tumble. Seek medical advice when you feel it's appropriate but remember; most issues aren't life-threatening.

### **4. Treat your child as a real person.**

Raising children is about developing real people. There is a lot in the news about young children in New Zealand and the negative issues surrounding them. Many of these are caused by simple neglect. From the moment your child is born think of them as a real person. They'll need a lot of parental input from you at first but eventually that child will become an expert in some career field, they'll have children of their own, and they'll create their own personal legacy.

Think of games and activities you can do together that are appropriate to their age. Most important is that you communicate in a positive way. Look your child in the eye and speak real words, even if the conversation is a little one sided for a while.

### **5. Seek advice.**

Raising children is not something you have to do on your own. There will be times when you need to seek advice. Find a person(s) who is positive and affirming, has experience with children, and who you trust. Use them as your sounding board.

Matters you might seek advice on are issues to do with health, growth stages, sleeping patterns, communication, playing with your child, and daycare or preschool facilities. Finally, don't forget there are professionals who can help with advice also.

And, most of all remember – it's supposed to be fun!