



PERINATAL SUPPORT
WASHINGTON

Creating a Wellness Plan

Need help completing this plan or finding referrals? Call or text Perinatal Support Washington's Warm Line to complete a wellness plan: 1-888-404-7763.

Therapy:

Therapy with a professional experienced in the mental health of new parents is crucial to getting better. Detail names, phone numbers, addresses, and next appointments.

Sleep Plan:

Aim for chunks of 4-5 hours of uninterrupted sleep. Detail how to schedule sleep.

Medical Management/Medications:

Medication might be the right decision for you. Detail names of health care providers; appointment details, medication names and dosages.

Other Support Team Members:

Grandparents, sisters, friends, church members, postpartum doula....

Nutrition Plan:

Emphasize protein to improve mood. Detail shopping, meal prep, and food ideas.

Support Group:

Social support is critical to reducing stress and to feel valued and cared for. Detail names, locations and meeting info for local groups.

Me Time/Couple Time:

What things rejuvenate you? Detail when you will have time by yourself and time with just your partner.

Household Help:

What can you delegate? What can you give up for now? List ideas and who will do what.

Common Questions About Creating a Wellness Plan

Do I need therapy? How could a therapist or counselor help?

This might be exactly the question that a therapist could answer with you. There are so many things happening to you right now--talking through them would be helpful. A therapist can also offer perspective on whether what you are experiencing is postpartum depression/anxiety/traumatic response, etc. For parents experiencing these issues, a specialist with training and experience is important. Find a therapist near you on our providers list: www.perinatalsupport.org/providers.

What about medications? I've never used them. Will I have to be on them forever? What if I am breastfeeding?

First off, needing/wanting medication is not a weakness, and it may not be the right choice for everyone. Medication is a tool that can be helpful for some and may be needed for others. We highly encourage you to meet with a well-trained provider on this issue, and to use the following sites to learn more: infantrisk.com or womensmentalhealth.org. You can find more resources for medication management on our website, perinatalsupport.org.

I obviously want more sleep, but how? Can sleep deprivation really cause the feelings I am having?

Sleep dramatically impacts our mood, and can be the biggest risk factor for mental health symptoms. Sometimes the very first treatment intervention for depression or anxiety symptoms will be sleep--that's how important it is. A sleep plan is way more than "sleep when the baby sleeps." It entails scheduling shifts with your partner so that you both get good sleep and asking for help to ensure that you are getting a minimum of 4-5 hours of sleep plus shorter stretches throughout the night and day.

A support group--really?

Support groups get a bad rap--maybe we should call them something else. The bottom line is that you will likely be surprised by our groups. They are down-to-earth, refreshingly honest, and often bring some humor to an otherwise difficult time. Also, they are a great way to meet other parents, and they are a great baby/parent-friendly place to go in the first weeks when you just want to get out of the house but haven't mastered breastfeeding in public, are not sure what to bring, etc. We have groups all around the state with times throughout the day and week. Social support is crucial to reducing stress; meeting other parents going through the same life struggles can be the best medicine.

How am I supposed to eat healthy when I can't even find time to eat, let alone cook?

Have you found yourself stuck holding a sleeping baby, without food or water for hours on end? Stash water bottles and healthy snacks on the coffee table. Prepare hardboiled eggs, 12 at a time. Focus on eating high-protein and highly nutrient-rich foods often. These will help balance your blood sugar. Have foods available that you can eat one-handed, such as yogurt, meat, cheese, pre-cut veggies and fruit, or pre-made smoothies from the store. Aim for no cooking, no plates, no utensils (well sometimes)--just open the fridge, grab, and put in your mouth. This phase won't last forever and usually when you're not taking good care of yourself, you feel worse and vice versa. It seems small, but eating well matters.

How can I possibly fit in me time? I'm feeding or attending to my baby all the time.

Taking care of yourself in the first weeks and months can seem like an impossible task, and taking care of your relationship might seem even harder. We strongly encourage you (and your partner) to take time every few days to yourself. This will look very different for each of us. And for many of us, the things we used to do to take care of ourselves are not possible. It's important to think small and schedule time regularly. What brought you joy pre-baby? Here are some ideas: hot shower by yourself, phone a friend, play music that makes you feel good, journal/jot down your thoughts and feelings (sticky notes ok!), or listen to a mindfulness meditation or a podcast.

I'm overwhelmed by the state of my home, and it's stressing me out. How can I get on top of things?

For household help, think of what you can delegate and what you can give up for now. Enlist everyone to do everything you don't want to do. Your job is to rest, heal, and take care of the baby. We mean it! If you don't have someone to ask, let things stay undone. You will get to it--at some point you will need clean dishes and you will do them.

What do you mean by a support team?

Is there someone in your life that you feel comfortable telling it like it is? A friend, a sibling, a parent, a partner? It's important to share how you are really feeling and process this intense experience you have been through. These are the people who you can ask for help, you can ask to just sit with you, or you can trust to take care of your baby. People often want to help but are not sure how to navigate those first days and weeks of new parenting. If you don't want people over, definitely say no. But if you'd like help or company, please ask them to come over and bring a meal on their way in and bring the garbage out when they leave! You can also find more information about support groups and our warm line on our website, perinatalsupport.org.