

Being a single parent - it's hard but it gets better.

You - you there in baby puke-stained trackpants, with sore nipples and tears streaming down your face. Yes, you, the single mum with a newborn. I understand that right now you feel like you have no idea what's happening or how you are going to manage everything. That you feel as though you are sinking in quicksand and there's no one to pull you out. I understand why you are pushing away help, because you naively think that you "have to be able to do it by yourself." I have been where you are. I have gone days without sleep, (and not figuratively speaking) I mean actual sunsets and sunrises with my eyes wide (well probably not 'that' wide!) open. I have gone days only eating junk food and too much chocolate and much much longer than I care to admit without showering or changing clothes. I told my 2-week old that I'd give him anything he wanted, he just had to stop crying, while my one-year-old babbled unaware of my emotional state, next to me. While I wasn't a single mum at this stage, it was only months away, when the stressors of a toddler, a newborn and a very unhappy, unhelpful, verbally and physiologically abusive husband decided gambling was more important than his family.

I know that the guilt of being a single mum compounds daily and you question your worth, your sanity, and your ability to be the amazing mum you always dreamt of being. Right now you feel like a failure, despite each and every person you encounter calling you "Supermum." Newsflash, mamma - you are Supermum!! The newborn months are hard on every family, and if you are doing it by yourself. You are surviving the hardest part, and you're doing so with only the resources you developed.

So believe me when I tell you that it gets better, it actually does.

I can tell you to take time for you, but I know the reality is that you probably can't right now. What I can tell you is that this is temporary. The hardest parts are right this second, and the good news about that is that it gets easier. It gets better, and you'll look back on these tired moments and wonder how in the world you made it through - but you will make it through.

No one needs to tell you that being a single parent may be the hardest job you'll ever have.

But here's the deal: With a little preparation and patience, you've got this. These tips will help ensure that this momentous rollercoaster is doable.

Create & stick to a routine.

This one will take a bit of time, so don't worry if you don't have it done by the end of the first week, heck don't put too much pressure on yourself, allow a good month or two!. But in general, a routine will make life much smoother with your newborn.

Babies aren't known for sticking to strict schedules, which is why I suggest a routine rather than a schedule. If your baby is hungry at 7:30 am, they aren't going to care that your schedule has breakfast listed at 9 am. A routine makes it easier to stay on top of things, and takes away some of the guesswork of "what do I do now?" that can come with new motherhood. Maybe doing the laundry every other day, washing the dishes once a day, always changing nappies in baby's room so the essential items are in the same place, not scattered around the house. It might also include things like an early afternoon walk through a local park or around the block, putting baby down to sleep after each feeding, or watching your favourite series on Netflix!

Cooking.

Cooking with a new baby is hard. So even if you love gourmet, multi-course meals, it's best to keep it simple. If you haven't had the baby yet, I highly recommend doing some meal prep and freezing some meals now. Think soups, stews, and casseroles. These are all meals that freeze well and reheat well. You can even prep them and freeze them in individual serving sizes to make it easier to grab and heat without deciding if you want to eat lasagna or casserole over and over!

Otherwise, go with simple meals. Choose your protein, bake a potato/pasta/couscous (etc) and add a salad for a simple to prep meal. You also want to consider how easy it is to eat with your baby in your arms. Sandwiches are good options for eating with full hands. So are veggies dipped in dip or hummus. Pizza is also a good one-handed meal...and who can pass by a good pizza!?! While you want to eat nutritious meals, remember many takeaways are great options too. Takeaways make it super easy because you don't even have to cook. And you may be able to get someone to deliver it to you, so you don't have to leave the house, either, it's a winner!!

Never compete or compare!

When you're trying to figure out being a mum, sometimes you'll turn to others for advice or examples of how to do it. There's nothing wrong with that. But never, ever compare yourself to them or compete with them. Learn from them, but don't allow yourself to feel like a failure if you don't do things quite the same way or at the same level. Use their experience to gain a better understanding of parenthood, but don't compete, it's not a race or a battle. Trust your instinct, do what feels right for you and your little one! You're on your own path and it's the right one for you and your baby.

Don't give up things you love.

I won't lie: there isn't going to be a lot of free time for you to engage in your hobbies and things you loved before your baby came along. But you still shouldn't give up things you love. You might only have 5-10 minutes at a time to engage in something you love, but that can be enough. So if you love to read, keep a book handy. If you like to draw, keep pads of paper and pencils scattered around the house. Look for other ways to keep the things you love close at hand and easy to access when and if you have time for them. The things you love will keep you connected to who you were before you had your baby, and this can help you avoid feeling like you're getting lost.

Focus on one day at a time.

Being a new parent can be overwhelming. There's so much to do just to take care of your child. Focus on one day at a time, today. However good or bad it is, today is all you need to worry about. Tomorrow isn't here yet. Next month isn't here yet. Plus, when you focus on today, you'll be more present with your baby. And trust me, things change so much so fast that you'll be glad for the memories you made being present with your baby instead of worrying about what's yet to come.



Hold on tight to the good moments, and dream about baby giggles and tiny smiles. Sneak a protein bar when you have a chance, and get outside. The sunlight will do you, your mood and your little one some good. Accept offers of help, and ask for help, this is not a sign of weakness or incompetence, everyone needs help, support and encouragement at different times during our life.

Here's a hygiene hack: bring your baby in the shower with you. They will enjoy the warm water and closeness and you won't feel disgusting for the next 24 hours.

Remember that this is only temporary, and it's hard because it's new - but it gets better.