

The

**BECOMING US™**

FOR

Family Nest  
Building Plan

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\_\_\_\_\_

and for the newly hatched

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The postpartum period, the “fourth trimester” is a time of adjustment for every member of a new family. Becoming a family isn't just a physical transition, it's a mental, emotional, relational and spiritual one too.

Create a plan with strong branches and solid roots so you can focus on the most important things: nesting, resting and the important work of family bonding.



For : \_\_\_\_\_

Make your health and wellbeing a priority. This helps you cope physically, mentally and emotionally.

Three easy, nutritious meals we can prepare or have prepared for us (no worms please) are:

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Gentle activity alleviates stress and lifts mood. Exercise or activities appropriate for me include:

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It takes time to find balance in your "new normal". If you're feeling bored or overwhelmed, try something simple, creative or expressive. Even 15 minutes can put more balance in your day. Dance, sing, journal, scrapbook, play an instrument, draw, color, doodle, crochet, knit.

*I enjoy:*

It's important to have things to look forward to so regularly plan something you love. Time out for yourself and couple-time together are both important.

*Once a week I would like to*

*Once a week I would like us to*

*Once a month I would like to*

*Once a month I would like us to*

*If I need to escape the nest occasionally, I can*

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Check in regularly with your partner to see how they are feeling physically and emotionally. Ask them what's on their mind. This creates connection, so important in the postpartum period. Your partner has their own stresses and also need downtime.

*I can support my partner by:*

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Give your partner plenty of space to find their own way with the chick. This increases confidence and self-esteem and lays foundations for their relationship with your little one.

*My partner can:*

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Your partner may be as sleep-deprived as you and also finding their own feet as a parent, so don't put too many expectations out there too soon. Be honest. Let your partner know how hard some days are. Give your partner opportunities to have whole days in the nest without you around so they get it.

When you are thinking about or feel appreciative of your partner, TELL THEM!



For : \_\_\_\_\_

- Support your partner's efforts to pamper and look after themselves, it's good for self-esteem.
- Look to other branches for relatives, friends or babysitters so you can build quality individual and couple time into your week. Ideas for contacts are on the last page.
- Surprise your partner occasionally with a date. Days might be best, it's hard to compete with sleep!
- Care for your baby as much as possible. The positive effects for your whole family will be there for the rest of your lives. Fathers or partners who take leave from work tend to end up being more involved later.

Ways I can care for my baby include:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Negotiate with your partner and take time out for yourself when you need it. You may have to scale down some activities for a little while – no migrating for days just now.

My nest-friendly exercise/time out:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Mamas can neglect their own nutrition because they're focusing on baby's. She will appreciate you preparing a healthy snack and glass of water, especially if she's breastfeeding.

Caring for a chick and keeping a clean nest takes more effort than one (or even two) pairs of wings are capable of. A postpartum doula or cleaner is cheaper than divorce! This need for extra help is limited, you won't need it forever, so take advantage of it now.

Ways to reduce the load are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Check in with your partner every day to see how she is coping. Make sure to cover all three wellness domains – physical, emotional and mental. Encourage her to take time out when she needs a break. Find out if your partner needs anything from you before giving advice or problem solving. She may just want a listening ear and a strong pair of wings around her. *I can help my partner by:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

If you're struggling, let your partner in, but don't burden her. If she is struggling too, seek help together. *Otherwise, I can help myself/get help by:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

When you feel appreciative of your partner, TELL HER!



For you both: \_\_\_\_\_

The more relaxed you are and the more time you take to get to know each other as a new parent and newly hatched chick, the smoother the transition into family will be. It takes at least 3-5 hours a day of just observing your baby to figure them out!

Take the pressure off yourselves and each other. Aim to be learners and not experts.

Take shortcuts: frozen meals, takeouts, nest-deliveries. Plan to spend your time recovering and adjusting.

Breastfeeding can be challenging.

Partner can be supportive by:

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Sleep is a huge issue for new parents.  
Negotiate night feedings/day naps/  
weekend sleep-ins:

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Sick baby duty arrangements:

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Some families like to nest uninterrupted for the first few weeks, others are eager to share their new addition. There is a big difference between visitors and helpers. You need helpers, especially in the beginning.

We can ask visitors to bring:

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Or to:

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A good time limit for visitors is:

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When mama is tired or baby needs a rest, we can use this signal:

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We can ask visitors to leave by saying:

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## Some things to plan ahead for:

Babies tend to be more settled in the first few weeks and then become more fussy often just as partners are heading back to work. Babies peak at crying 6-8 weeks postpartum, so arrange for more support then.

Some conflict in the postpartum period is perfectly normal. New experiences, steep learning curves, sleep deprivation and hormones combine to make it inevitable for 92% of couples. Don't panic, things will settle down as you work together to create your "new normal". If they don't, seek help earlier rather than later.

Most couples find it takes longer than the expected six weeks to resume sex. A mismatch in sex drive is also common in the first year postpartum. It doesn't mean there is anything wrong with your relationship. Stay connected in other ways and your sex life will return sooner.

If any aspects of the birth were distressing for either of you, seek a familiar, trusted, good listener to talk it through who can refer you on to additional support if needed. Birth trauma can affect both parents.

The postpartum period can be lonely sometimes so make a list of contacts on the last page. Build a support network of local services and professionals so so you have strong branches and solid roots for your nest.

## Nesthold Chores

Make a list of all the chores that normally need doing: including caring for older hatchlings, laundry, dog walking, etc. Work out which ones are essential (E), preferable (P) and forgettable (F). Work out who is going to do what, keeping in mind it's easy to over-estimate and over-extend and the main priority is nesting and resting. Outsource what you can and be willing to negotiate everything as mama's, baby's and papa's (or partner's) needs change over the next few months.

Chores	E	P	F	Person Responsible



## When to seek advice from the wise owls in our tree:

**The baby blues are common for most new mamas, but if the following extend past the first couple of weeks postpartum or begin later in the first six months they could be early warning signs of needing extra support:**

- Prolonged teariness, feeling hopeless or 'flat'
- Not being able to rest or sleep even if the baby is, insomnia
- Worrying excessively about the baby, feeling anxious and unable to relax
- Intrusive thoughts that shock or scare you
- Frequently angry or irritable
- Changes to appetite – weight loss or gain

**Factors that increase the risk for postpartum mood disorders include:**

- A traumatic birth experience
- Previous episodes of anxiety or depression
- Feelings of depression in the third trimester
- A history of loss, especially of a baby, child, mother or father
- Having to go through prolonged assisted reproduction prior to this baby
- Having unrealistic expectations
- Expecting things to be perfect or in control
- Inability to settle down or sleep when offered the opportunity to do so
- A baby who is restless, difficult to settle or unwell

**Papas can experience postpartum depression too, symptoms include:**

- Irritability, anxiety and anger
- Loss of libido
- Changes in appetite
- Risk-taking behavior
- Withdrawal and isolation from others
- Increased work hours
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Feeling of resentment or jealousy towards the baby

**If your experience of the birth was traumatic, seek support, especially if you experience any of the following:**

- Sudden, vivid flashbacks of the birth or nightmares
- Avoiding thinking or talking about the birth or people that remind you of it
- Inability to remember important parts of the birth
- Panic attacks, sweating or heart palpitations
- Feeling startled, hyper vigilant, on edge or on guard
- Intense irritability or anger

*I may also need to seek help or advice for other issues including:*

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**Ways to increase coping ability:**

- Having realistic expectations of life in a nest.
- Building up a support system.
- Staying connected with your partner.
- Making good nutrition, rest, relaxation and appropriate exercise priorities.
- Taking your time, going with the flow, being a learner and not an expert.
- Aiming for happy and relaxed, not perfect.



## Our strong branch, solid roots support system:

### Friends and family:

Close friends I can call when I need to talk are:

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Ones who can hold the chick while I shower or who I trust to take for a walk around the block:

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Local friends or family we can see:

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Other friends or family we can call:

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Online friends or family:

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### Professionals:

Pediatrician: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician: \_\_\_\_\_

Midwife: \_\_\_\_\_

Physiotherapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Chiropractor: \_\_\_\_\_

Postpartum doula: \_\_\_\_\_

Lactation consultant/Breastfeeding: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship Coach/Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Psychologist/Psychiatrist: \_\_\_\_\_

Massage therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

### Services:

Diaper/nappy service: \_\_\_\_\_

Sleep/settling: \_\_\_\_\_

Infant massage: \_\_\_\_\_

Lactation clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

### Support Groups:

Parent support group: \_\_\_\_\_

Local play groups: \_\_\_\_\_

Baby friendly fitness classes: \_\_\_\_\_

Breastfeeding Support group: \_\_\_\_\_

Mental Health Support group: \_\_\_\_\_

Online support groups: \_\_\_\_\_

### Home care:

House cleaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal shopper: \_\_\_\_\_

Stores that deliver: \_\_\_\_\_

Dry cleaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Take-out: \_\_\_\_\_

### Hotlines for advice and support:

Breastfeeding help: \_\_\_\_\_

Sleep/settling advice: \_\_\_\_\_

Crisis Hotlines: \_\_\_\_\_

Suicide risk: \_\_\_\_\_

Risk of violence: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency: \_\_\_\_\_

### Useful websites:

Postpartum Support International

<http://www.postpartum.net/>

### The Period of Purple Crying:

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### Recommended reading:

Becoming Us, 8 Steps to Grow a Family That Thrives

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### Other Recommendations:

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Love, learn and grow together, reach out and build a warm, secure nest for your family!

For more see [ellytaylor.com](http://ellytaylor.com)