



SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT

Infants can demand more time than a new parent may expect.

Expectations vs. reality

Parenthood's challenges catch many new parents off-guard

By Lockie Hunter | WNC Parent contributor

The big day draws near. You have visions of your new angel softly sleeping nearby while you lovingly paste each memory into the scrapbook. Yet, the reality of bringing home a new baby can be unexpected.

“Although these may be some of the happiest days of your life they are also some of the most challenging,” says Trish Beckman, certified nurse midwife with the Women’s Wellness and Education Cen-

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Expectations

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ter and Empowered Birthing Child-birth Classes.

She notes that new parents are often surprised by some of the mixed emotions that normally occur in the first few weeks after the birth of their baby.

“The baby that is so cute when asleep can be so demanding of your attention at all other times and often in the middle of the night,” Beckman says, adding that meeting the baby’s needs can mean that Mom’s needs just simply don’t get met.

Laura Traylor, of Oteen, expected to be “bouncing around, cleaning house, fixing meals, helping out others, sewing various projects, all the while watching this beautiful, quiet and content baby sleeping in her bouncy seat — allowing me time to do all these wonderful idealistic things.”

Traylor found reality to be much different.

“I was too zonked to warm up leftov-

MORE INFORMATION

For a list of support groups that may be helpful to parents of new babies, see the calendar on Page 78.

ers or make a few necessary phone calls while my beautiful baby cried and wanted all my attention,” she says.

Lis Anna, of Asheville, had very few expectations.

“I think it is how I see the world in general,” says Anna. “Go out, do great things, do silly things and do them with great passion. So, I had no idea what to expect with having a baby. I just knew I loved her the minute I knew about her.”

But, after baby was born, Anna was exhausted and the baby’s father was not prepared for how intense the whole experience was.

“He thought you just walked into the hospital on your due date, had a baby and left. He almost fainted in the birthing room when he saw that it was not simple and something could happen to me,” Anna says.

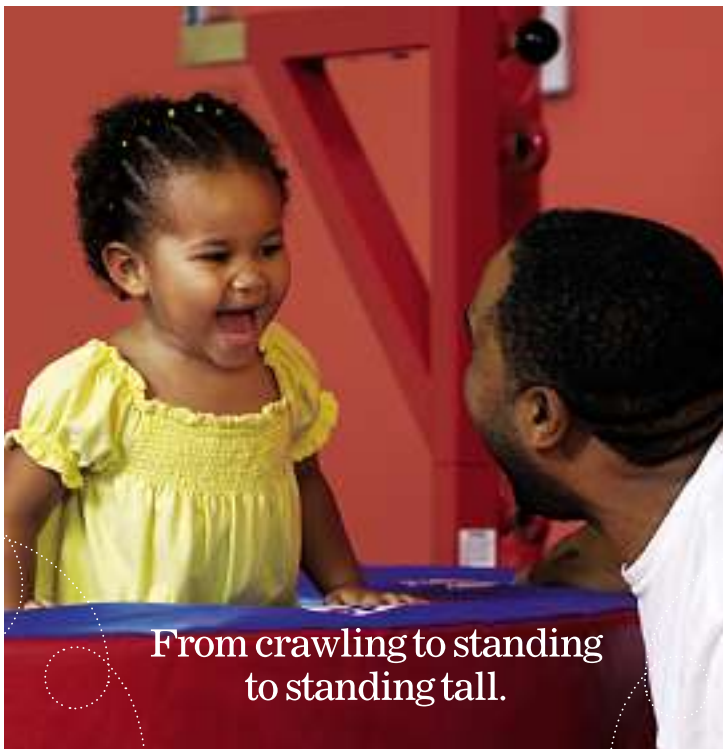
Terra Maney, of Asheville, found that after the birth of each child, while most of her friends seemed to have little trouble feeling great and getting out, it would take her six to nine months to feel physically “capable” again.

Her solution? “In pregnancy, I began to discover natural health solutions,” says Maney, “and when my first child and I struggled with systemic yeast, my quest for well-being became a passion that expanded into my current lifework.”

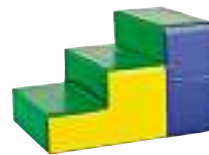
It takes a village

Once Traylor’s husband went back to work her parents and in-laws each took a week of staying with them to help.

“These grandparents held babies, did chores, ran errands and basically took care of us — giving me time to nap,” she says. “It was a wonderful gift of their



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giving themselves to us and us giving them time with their new grandchild.”

While family support can be crucial, many moms also need outside support. Beckman strongly recommends joining Mamatime, a nonjudgmental 12-week group for new moms that meets weekly with 10-12 moms and a trained facilitator.

“The support of other new moms can be instrumental in helping new moms find balance and humor as they navigate the first few months of motherhood,” Beckman says.

The stork redux

Beckman notes that having two little ones doesn’t always add up.

“One plus one often feels like a lot more than two,” she says.

Traylor found that even before the little brother was born, her daughter Olivia Belle loved him dearly.

“She’d sing and talk to him in utero, but despite her obvious love of ‘her baby’ we were concerned about jealousy,” Traylor says.

Yet Traylor’s daughter only occasionally reverted to trying to act like a baby, talking and “playing” baby. Maney feels that even when the older child is excited about the new baby and loves to help “mother” the new sibling, the older child still at times experiences mixed feelings.

“On at least two occasions, my oldest child bit her younger sister’s toes while I was holding the younger child on my hip.” Beckman adds that if your first child is a toddler you may consider buying him or her a little doll with diapers and blankets and sharing the baby time together.

Lessons learned

While having a new baby presents challenges, the joys are manifold. The magical moments can be married with self-discoveries as well. One of Maney’s revelations serves her well to this day.

“Before I was pregnant with my first child, I struggled to advocate for myself,” she says. “The existence of my child helped (and continues to help) me advocate for myself, for my children, and for wellness and equality for all living

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CERTIFIED NURSE-MIDWIFE

creatures.”

Beckman suggests that new moms get ready for this time.

“My top recommendations include taking a childbirth class with a great breast-feeding component to get you and your partner well prepared for both labor and breast-feeding,” she says.

“Also, do what you can to make sure some of your basic needs can be met. Think about meals and have your fridge and freezer stocked with healthy nutri-

tious and easy to prepare foods before you deliver.”

Anna organized shifts.

“It sounds silly, but clearly delineating the times worked beautifully,” she says.

“I think people think if they create a schedule they are squeezing out the love and beauty and awe. Really, with a schedule, you make room for more of it.”

It was helpful to Maney to journal and to write letters to her new child.

“For those of us who had complicated relationships with our own mothers, the birth of a daughter can be the catalyst for much emotional turmoil,” Maney says. “I had to learn (starting in the pregnancy) to make better boundaries and focus my prime energy on my relationship with my new daughter.”

A few weeks after Anna’s baby was born, a friend gave her wonderful advice.

He said, “love every minute of the waking up in the middle of the night and the confusion and the beauty because children pass through phases quickly. These times won’t last forever, in fact, most of them won’t last a few months.”



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