

Oh baby, let's talk

A funny thing happens when two are about to become three.

Some prospective dads jump into the new role, enjoying feeling the baby move and telling everyone at work that "he" is pregnant. He is growing into the new role and his partner will be watching this, and feeling confident that he will be able to give her the necessary support.

The physical changes she experiences need him to tune into the fact that sometime she is going to be feeling lousy and unable to do things she usually does, such as her share of the housework and cooking. If she is feeling really sick, she may well be asking herself why on earth she thought a baby was a good idea.

They both need to have some serious discussion about how they are going to organise their lives once the baby makes its appearance. They may well take on a more traditional 1950s-type family lifestyle for a while, with him playing the role of provider and her being at home with the newborn.

In this scenario, he needs her to understand the importance of his role of being financial provider for a while, and she needs him to realise that she has given up a lot of her individual life to bring this child into the world.

Going from an independent lifestyle with a job, coffee with friends and visits to the gym to being at home with a baby 24 hours a day can be a huge culture shock.

If he has been working hard all day to bring home the bacon, the first thing on his mind when he walks through the door may not be to relieve his wife of a screaming infant.

Or, if he can't wait to take over when he gets home and is serious about sharing the parenting 50-50, he's probably almost as much in need of sleep as his partner.

It's important to have back-up systems. If you have parents and in-laws who want to help, don't be too proud to accept, because it means you can still have some couple and individual time. Or swap some time with friends with young children, or let a close friend or relative mind the baby while you both nip out for coffee.

And there needs to be some individual time as well, when he can still have a game of golf with some mates and she can leave him with the baby and go out for coffee with her girlfriends.

Small things, but they can be the difference between sanity and feeling trapped.

Such a huge life change brings its joys and its demands, and making adjustments and allowances is crucial to a smooth transition to family life.

Survival tips

- **Be realistic and open about the changes a baby will bring to your lives**
- **Give each other credit for the different stresses you may feel**
- **Make sure there is still some couple and individual time after the baby arrives.**