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Reach Out and Connect: Preparing for a New Baby During COVID-19 Part 4



Today's workshop is the final in our series about preparing for a new baby during COVID-19. With all the social distancing measures, we realize it is harder to access information or attend parenting classes on what to expect when bringing home a new baby. So, today we have a very special Q & A session with medical expert, **Dr. Gina Reinoso, a pediatrician at Nassau University Medical Center in Brooklyn**, to help address some of the concerns you may have!

1. Can you tell us about what sort of COVID-specific mental health struggles that new mothers might face, and what advice you have to manage those challenges?

Dr. Reinoso: One of the biggest challenges new mothers are facing right now is grief surrounding their lost experiences. Many mothers understandably have high expectations for the joyful experience of having their friends and family rallying around them to welcome their new child into the world, but unfortunately COVID has taken that away. In addition, post-partum depression rates may be on the rise as well. There are a few ways I would recommend handling these struggles.

1. Remember that **asking for help is a sign of strength**. Your pediatrician is here to help you, always.
2. If you can, **try to use the powers of technology to your benefit!** Facetime/Zoom your friends and family as often as possible to show them your new baby and bond as best you can.
3. **Do what you love!** Whether that is reading, gardening, cooking, or anything else, this will help elevate your mood by keeping you focused on the positives.
4. **Sleep 8 hours!** Resting when your baby rests is a great way to catch up on sleep you may have missed during the night.



2. What practical tips do you have for new parents who now face job insecurity?

Dr. Reinoso: This is a particularly difficult situation. I advise my parents to allow the feelings of sadness and frustration, take a deep breath, and focus on what they can control.

1. **If you have them, use your "helpers."** Engage older siblings as much as you can by encouraging them to be your special helpers.
2. **Try the Headspace app.** Headspace, a leading meditation app, recently offered a free, year-long subscription to their app for unemployed individuals.
 - Research shows that this app really helps decrease stress and anxiety, increases happiness, and more:
 - <https://www.headspace.com/science/meditation-research>.
3. **See if you qualify for expanded unemployment insurance benefits.**
 - You should contact your [state's unemployment insurance program](#) as soon as possible after becoming unemployed.



- When you file a claim, you will be asked for certain information, such as addresses and dates of your former employment. To make sure your claim is not delayed, be sure to give complete and correct information.
- It may be helpful to look for resources in your community that are there to support you in this process! Try contacting a social worker in your local health care network, other resources in your specific community, and even check out the ACA Health Insurance at healthcare.gov

4. Try not to feel bad about multitasking!

- Applying for jobs while your baby is napping does not make you a bad parent – you are doing your best so that you can provide for your baby in the future!

3. How can new parents build a healthy bond with their babies in the time of social distancing?

Dr. Reinoso: If there's one positive of the global pandemic, it's that parents may have more time at home to bond with their babies! Here are some tips I suggest.



1. Being "skin-to-skin"

- Cradling your baby and gently rocking or stroking them. If you and your partner, if you have a partner, both hold and touch your infant frequently, your little one will soon come to know the difference between your touches.

2. Breastfeeding and bottle-feeding are both natural times for bonding.

- Infants respond to the smell and touch of their mothers, as well as the responsiveness of the parents to their needs. If you are able to, breastfeeding is recommended!



3. Massage your baby according to [this Mayo Clinic guide](#)

- If your baby has any underlying health issues, talk to your baby's doctor before trying infant massage. The doctor can help you determine if massage is appropriate. You might also ask your baby's doctor if they can recommend an infant massage specialist or other qualified expert who can teach you techniques to address your baby's specific needs.

4. How can new parents promote healthy brain development for their babies?

Dr Reinoso: Studies show the first three years of life are where there is an explosion of brain development—your baby's brain cells are making so many connections! Engaging in the following activities with your child will nurture critical social-emotional-language skills and may alleviate or minimize the toxic stress that often derails healthy brain development:

1. **Read together** every day with your child. If you visit a Reach Out and Read clinic (reachoutandreadnyc.org/clinic-locations), you can get a free children's book with every visit!)
2. **Rhyme**, sing, play, talk (about anything), and cuddle with your child
3. **Develop Routines**, particularly around meals, sleep, and family fun
4. **Reward** your child with praise to promote positive behavior



5. **Relationship - develop a strong one** with your child. A great way to start is by incorporating the bonding tips in the above section!

5. Any additional resources you suggest for new parents?

Dr. Reinoso: Absolutely!

1. [Postpartum Support International](#) toll-free Help Line, in English and Spanish, refers callers to appropriate local resources: 1-800-944-4773 or text 1-503-894-9453 (English) or 1-971-420-0294 (Spanish)
2. [HealthyChildren.org](#) – check out this website backed by pediatricians nationwide!

For any questions about the content or our virtual programming, please email Kristen Rocha Aldrich at [krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org](mailto: krochaaldrich@reachoutandreadnyc.org).