



lead these classes have seen dads in a variety of emotional states, so don't feel embarrassed or hesitant about asking them for help.

Will I be a good dad?

Remember that you're not going to have to tackle every part of fatherhood at once. For the first few years, a lot of the parenting involves skills taught in childbirth classes and mastered through practice.

It's much like other new roles that you might take on in your life. If you're married, you didn't automatically know how to be a good husband. You learned along the way with your wife.

You have plenty of time before you have to set curfews, teach your child to drive, and dole out relationship and career advice. These opportunities to teach your child will feel like a natural progression when they arrive. If you need guidance, check for resources in the community, including parenting classes.

Becoming A Father

When You're Expecting

Pregnant women experience a variety of emotions and life changes. But most first-time dads have their own feelings and concerns to deal with, too.

If you feel shocked, panicked, overwhelmed, scared, or like you're just not ready, you're not alone. Like any big change, this will require a major adjustment. And if the pregnancy wasn't planned — half of all pregnancies aren't — you may be feeling these emotions even more intensely.

You don't have to feel guilty or anxious about having mixed emotions; it's completely normal. And you can take steps to get more comfortable with the pregnancy, the idea of parenthood, and the preparations that can make both go as smoothly as possible.

Here are a few concerns that may be bothering you and ways to keep them in perspective:

Will I be capable of caring for a baby?

No one is born knowing this stuff, not even your pregnant partner — that's why there are childbirth classes. Depending on what's available in your area, you can take classes as early as the 12th week of pregnancy or one that focuses just on the day of labor and can be taken as late as the eighth month. And some communities offer classes designed just for first-time dads.

Most classes teach how to change a diaper, hold the baby, feed and burp the baby, put the baby to sleep, install a car seat, and childproof your home. You'll also learn where to park your car when you get to the hospital, how to get through labor, and how to care for your baby and your partner when you get home from the hospital.

Along with the lessons, you'll meet other guys going through the same experience who might be dealing with similar feelings, and that can be a huge help. The nurses and childbirth educators who

It may help to talk to and spend time with other fathers and discuss issues you may be grappling with. If you feel like you have issues about your own father to work through, try to talk with someone — maybe a counselor or a family member — before the baby arrives so that they don't interfere with your relationship with your own child.


How can we afford this?

Feeding, clothing, and educating another human being is going to cost money that's now spent on other things — there's no question about it. But you can reduce your stress about the finances.

It may help to get a sense of what your costs will be right after the baby is born. Your health insurer, employer, or your partner's employer may be able to give you an idea of the costs and what is covered. Many workplaces now offer some paid paternity leave, so be sure to ask.

Consider meeting with a financial planner to get some money-management guidance. You may also want to talk to other new parents you know to get an idea of how they managed and what unexpected expenses cropped up.

You can open a college fund — or any kind of bank account — any time to save for new expenses. You may want to start putting away a few dollars each week to fund items like childcare and diapers. That way, you'll have a head start on meeting your child's financial needs.

 "Before the baby was born, there was this dread that my life being all about me was coming to an end. What I didn't know at the time, though, was that hanging with my kid was going to be so much better than any of the individual pursuits I was missing out on."
- quote from a first-time father

BABY BLUES

BY RICK KIRKMAN & JERRY SCOTT



dramatically. So your partner might want to talk about the pregnancy while you're still adjusting to it.

If you're not ready to talk to her yet, you have other options. You may be more comfortable confiding in friends, relatives, and other new dads, who can offer reassurance and helpful suggestions. Many hospitals and childbirth centers also have professionals who work with new parents and can speak with you confidentially.

Remember that billions of guys before you experienced — and survived — fatherhood. There's no secret handshake and you're not supposed to instinctively know how to be a good dad. Just do your best to prepare for the birth, know that what follows will be on-the-job training, and reach out for the many resources that can help.

Taken in part from:

Downshen, Steven. Sept 2008. *Becoming a Father*. Retrieved on November 30, 2009 from http://kidshealth.org/parent/pregnancy_newborn/pregnancy/father.html#

Remember, you won't have to pay for certain expenses. For instance, if your partner decides to breastfeed, you'll save money on the cost of feeding your newborn. Also, many families share maternity and baby clothes because pregnant women and babies wear a particular size of clothes for such a short time.

Is this the end of my independence?

Fatherhood doesn't have to spell the end of fun. True, you may not get much sleep or time for yourself during the first few months until your baby starts sleeping through the night. But when the baby sleeps more, you and your partner will have more time for things you enjoy, together and individually.

Again, it's important to work together, communicate, and trade off on the childcare responsibilities so that you each get what you need. And try to get to know other new parents, who can share their perspectives and offer a sounding board.

In the early years, you can include your little one in many activities — maybe your child can sit with you while you watch a basketball game or read the newspaper or a book. Check out the special baby carriers that let parents take their tots along on walks and hikes. It's easy to fear losing out on free time, but most moms and dads discover that once their child is born they treasure time spent with their baby.

Talking About It

Communication can be a challenge for expectant couples. Even before the pregnancy shows, moms-to-be have strong physical reminders that a baby is on the way and life is going to change



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **Ready to Learn**—Feb 17th at the Utah County Health Dept (UCHD), Rm. 1601 from 12-1 p.m. Bring your children and learn about the fun ways you can make reading, math, and science enjoyable for your young ones. Receive a complimentary book.
- **Car Seat Safety Class**—Feb 10th, 10am and Feb 4th, 4:30pm, at UCHD, Rm. #2601.
- **Explore the Born Learning Trail**- there are seven throughout Utah County . For location of Born Learning Trails see www.unitedwayuc.org/welcomebaby
- **Provo City Library**— **"Book Babies"** Friday from 10-10:30 a.m. for infants 0-12 mos. **"Mother Goose Time"** every Friday from 11-12pm for 1 year olds. Age appropriate songs, stories, and activities for baby and their parents/caregivers.
- **Orem City Library**— **"Laptime"** T, W, Th at 10am in Hogwarts Corner; 20 min; for babies & toddlers; includes songs, fingerplays & short stories. **"Storytime"** T, W, Th at 10:30am in the Storytelling Wing.; 30 min; for preschoolers & young school age children; includes stories, puppets & activities .

