

Ways to Bond After the Birth of Your Baby

After the baby is here – healthy and alive and safe in your arms – you may feel ready to bond, or you may be in a place to continue to strengthen your connection. Sometimes, though, the new baby reminds us of who is missing, and renewed grief makes it hard to continue the bonding process. It doesn't help that you'll also be experiencing a roller coaster of emotions due to hormone changes in your postpartum body. Do not feel bad if you're still feeling numb or disconnected even after your baby's birth. It's a process and cannot occur in one moment. It won't cause damage to your baby or your relationship if it takes longer. Strong and loving relationships grow and exist even without that immediate sense of parental love.

Here are some more ways you can start this process after your baby is born.

Feed Your Baby

Fulfilling your baby's most basic needs is the first step in bonding. Taking time to feed your baby and focus on that time together will help form that closeness. Whether you choose to breastfeed or bottle-feed, spending time feeding your baby while looking into each other's eyes will help grow love between the two of you.

Practice Skin to Skin/Kangaroo Care

[The benefits of skin-to-skin care](#), sometimes referred to as kangaroo care, are well-known. Holding your baby close to your skin helps calm you and your baby. It also regulates baby's temperature, heartbeat, and breathing. It's also been shown to enhance mother/baby communication. Carrying your baby in a sling or wrap can help this closeness as well. Babies radiate warmth and that feeling, especially after loss, is one that is so memorable and so special to experience.

Take in the Newborn Scent

Nothing smells as good as your newborn baby. While you're snuggling, take time to breathe in the scent from your baby's head. Science has shown that the "[new baby smell](#)" helps stimulate bonding for mothers. The smell can be intoxicating and can release "feel good" hormones for mother.

Communicate with Your Baby

It's never too early to start reading to your baby. Pick out books for every stage of development and establish a reading routine. Holding your baby on your lap while reading will help you bond. A special way that PALS parents like to bond with their baby is by reading a [story about being a rainbow baby](#), or baby born after loss. There are many books out there geared toward babies and children to help you explain their special status in your life. Even telling the story of the baby that came before them – explaining who their sibling is and how much you loved them – helps create a special family connection that will assist with the bonding process. And it helps you work through some of the renewed grief that comes after birth.

Play with Your Baby

When your baby is a newborn, you can feel like you're just fulfilling basic needs. While those acts help form a connection, it doesn't feel like there's one while you're in the moment. That's why it is also

important for you to take some time each day to play with your baby. Use tummy time as a time to interact with your baby. Put out toys for them to reach out to or to grab. You can also play games like Peek A Boo and Patty Cake are enjoyable for your baby and help you have some fun together. The smiles and coos are worth it!

Take Care of Yourself

You cannot take care of others if you're not taking care of yourself. Feeling depleted emotionally and physically will also impact your ability to bond with your new baby. Remember to take time for self-care, whatever that looks like for you. Take time to take care of yourself so that you can be the best parent to your new baby.

Bonding with the baby born after loss may be a struggle, but it will be worth it. However, if at any point your feelings overwhelm you or interfere with your ability to care for your infant, please seek support or help from your child's pediatrician or your counselor.