

# Babyproofing Your Relationship



## Nurturing your partnership after baby

Many of us are quite surprised when we realize the profound effect that a baby has on our marriage. It seems like just yesterday we were ecstatically happy anticipating the birth of our child. We looked forward to the increased joy and fulfillment a baby would bring to our marriage. Within a few short months, many of us find that there is not only less intimacy, but also more conflict and even hostility.

In his extensive research of the postpartum period, John Gottman found that 67% of people report they are less satisfied with their marriages after having a child. This means that only 33% of people report they have remained as happy or are happier with their marriages since having a baby. Most people are confused about how these changes happened and even more confused about how to repair their relationship.

## Improving your bond with each other

During the perinatal period, conflict and hostility will often increase and emotional intimacy can deteriorate. Couples are exhausted and become overwhelmed, and as a result, passion, sex and romance plummet. Counseling can help you understand what is happening during a moment that should be a very precious and special. If you are experiencing difficulties, please seek out assistance. Marital difficulties are most easily resolved when help is sought early on.

## Signs your partnership is deteriorating

Further assistance may be necessary if one or both partners is experiencing the following:

1. Becoming critical, defensive, or disrespectful of each other.
2. Saying things you later regret.
3. Being unable to consider your partner's point of view or to compromise.
4. Difficulty discussing issues with your spouse calmly.
5. Seeing your partner as your enemy instead of your ally.
6. Feeling at times like you don't like or respect your partner anymore.
7. Feeling unappreciated, neglected & lonely.

## Proactive steps to maintain marital satisfaction and happiness

1. Recognizing that both partners are experiencing new and different stressors. It is important to realize that it is the situation that is causing the problems, not your partner.
2. Delight in your baby. Love, hold, and play with your baby together and separately.
3. Cool down your conflicts. Keep arguments respectful and constructive. Be especially careful of criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling. These are the traits that are the strongest predictors of divorce.
4. Start your conversations gently. Conversations that begin with anger also end with anger 96% of the time.
5. Accept influence from your partner. Compromise, compromise, compromise.
6. Calm down by self-soothing. Take breaks when necessary or mutually negotiate a time out.

Jacki Silber has been a Marriage & Family Therapist for over 20 years. Her passion is helping parents to feel good while also fully experiencing the joy of parenthood. Please contact Jacki if she can be of any assistance to your relationship.

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