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# YOUR POST-BABY RELATION*shifts*

Life changes when you have a baby – and that includes your relationships. Here's how to stay sweet with everyone from your BFF to your boss



Feature: Lara Brunt and Janine Winlaw Photos: istock

**N**ow you're a mum, every waking moment is spent looking after your little one, catching up on housework, and maybe even juggling work as well. Add to that making time for your partner, family and friends, a spot of shut-eye and some me-time – it's no wonder you're feeling stretched!

With so much going on, it's easy to see how those closest to you may feel left out, or how professional relationships can change. The people around you are getting used to a whole new you. So here's how to keep things sweet with key folk in your life...

## Your partner

Becoming a parent is a steep learning curve for you and your other half. After having a baby together, you may be feeling more bonded, or you could be feeling the strain of added responsibility and sleepless nights. Don't think you can just muddle through – keeping your relationship on track when you're both tired and overwhelmed takes commitment and teamwork.



**WHAT TO DO** Make an effort to praise each other and recognise the work you're both doing. 'Resentment is a passion killer,' says Lin Griffiths from Relate For Parents (relateforparents.org.uk). 'Tell him how you're feeling. Use sentences that begin with "I" – as in "I'm tired today and could do with a hand with the housework", rather than ones that begin with "You", which can sound like an attack, such as "You never do the washing up"! Take steps to regain your pre-baby intimacy. Once your baby's in bed, turn off the TV and mobiles and talk. You may be feeling too shattered for sex, but try scheduling a date night once a month – it could lead to a bit more lovin'!

## Your BFF

You used to do everything together, from all-day shopping sessions to regular mid-week cocktails. Now you're a mum, it's inevitable that you'll have less time for your best buddy. If she's a mum herself, she'll most likely understand and you can bond over nappies and nipple cream. But if you're the first one to have a baby, she's probably feeling a bit put out and even, dare we say it, bored by your baby talk.

**WHAT TO DO** Try to put yourself in your friend's place. She'll be pleased and excited for you, but she'll have equally important things happening in her life. Keep up to date with each other's lives with texts and phone calls and try to make time for a regular, baby-free catch-up. 'Be realistic about what you can achieve. Can you manage a night out or lunch once a month, or an exercise class or coffee once a week?' says relationship psychologist Jacqui Marson (jacquimarson.co.uk).

Make an effort to meet up in non-mum environments, but there's no need to ban baby talk – just don't bore your mate with endless tales about night feeds and nappies. Instead, give her the chance to build up a relationship with your baby by inviting her round. She'll soon be as smitten as you!



## Your mum

Having a baby often strengthens your bond with your mum, but it can lead to tensions, too. She wants to pass on all her knowledge, but you want to do it your way. While it's important to forge your own identity, remember her support will be a huge help.

**WHAT TO DO** Acknowledge your mum's wisdom, but gently remind her that parenting advice has changed a lot over the years. Tactfully help her get up on current advice with a grandparenting book. 'Most grannies today haven't heard of baby-led weaning or controlled crying,' says Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall, author of *The Pocket Book Of Good Grannies* (£9.99, Short Books). Discuss your expectations and her willingness to be involved, too. 'All grannies are different – some are always trying to help, and parents find it stifling,' says Jane. 'Others are no help at first, but will probably come into their own when your child starts walking and talking.' Rising childcare costs mean grandparents are increasingly helping out, but don't just assume that your mum will want or be able to. If she does, then agree on how often and show her your appreciation.



## Your boss

A recent survey by maternity coaching company Talking Talent found that more than a quarter of women felt being a working mum had a negative impact on their relationship with their boss. But with care you can manage both motherhood and your job.

**WHAT TO DO** During your maternity leave, take advantage of KIT (Keeping In Touch) days to catch up with your boss so you know what's been going on. Once you're back at work, you'll both need to be flexible, so talk about your workload and new commitments that you have, such as picking up your baby from childcare. Supernanny Jo Frost says, 'This isn't about you going into the office and saying, "I'm a mum now so you have to accommodate me." Take solutions, not problems, into meetings, and be prepared to discuss ideas on how it'll all move forward.'

Your boss and workmates will hopefully understand that it's tough to be apart from your baby, especially at first, but try to avoid constant phone calls to your child's carer. 'Texting is a great way to get updates from whoever's looking after your child without the phone ringing all day,' says Jo. 'You could even get them to text a picture of what your child is doing at lunchtime.' 

