

Taking care of yourself with a new baby

“Having a baby is a hugely sacred time in a woman’s journey,” says Kathy Milliken, Founder of Baby, Bump & Me, which provides everything from pregnancy yoga, to postpartum and parenting workshops. “However, the days after giving birth are often overlooked. Many women might be more focused on the lovely moments that follow birth, from snuggles to walks with the baby, that they find expectations can exceed reality. They forget about the emotional impact and the demands a new arrival can bring.”



Kathy Milliken

Kathy, who has two daughters, a three- and five-year-old, is a qualified Infant Massage Instructor, Pregnancy and Postnatal Yoga Teacher, Birth and Postnatal Doula, and volunteer Breastfeeding Counsellor. She is very passionate about preparing women both mentally and physically for all aspects of childbirth, but particularly the postnatal period, “It’s

Kathy Milliken, Founder of Baby, Bump & Me, speaks about the importance of not just nurturing your baby, but also your own wellbeing after giving birth

never just a one-way street when it comes to birth and parenting. It’s so individual to everyone and preparation comes in so many different forms.”

Kathy continues, “In my workshops, when I ask women what their plans are after they get their baby home from the hospital, many haven’t even thought about it!

“Yes, it’s a blissful and wonderful time, but it’s all-consuming and there’s a whole spectrum of emotions. It’s about setting your expectations at a realistic level. There’s going to be sleep deprivation, and the simplest of tasks become daunting when you don’t have sleep.

“It’s so important to not shy away from these feelings. Know that you’re not alone. Don’t be afraid to ask for support from your partner or family. Communication

is vital, particularly within relationships, because that whole dynamic can change with a new arrival.”

PRENATAL PLANNING

Kathy says putting pen-to-paper in the prenatal period and thinking about what is going to make your life easier is a help. “What tasks are going to start building up, such as washing, cooking and cleaning, and how will they be handled when you’re spending so much time with the baby.

“You and your partner will both be affected by the change, so be patient with each other. Give each other time out without feeling guilty, whether that’s 15 minutes or half-an-hour to go for a walk, or get other things done. And be patient with yourself; you and your baby are a little team and you’re learning to work together.”

Kathy adds that minding your mental health after

birth is important. “Ups and downs are inevitable, however if you feel that the bad days are outweighing the good, it’s always a good idea to chat to someone about this. If you don’t feel comfortable speaking to a family member, get in touch with your GP, Public Health Nurse or various other supportive agencies, like Nurture Health. They are there to listen and support you in a non-judgemental way.”

Looking after your physical health should also not be overlooked, particularly during Covid, stresses Kathy. “Don’t dismiss aftercare. Visiting a women’s health physio after having your baby is key to knowing how you are recovering after birth, and understanding the correct exercises you can be doing to aid this further. Supporting your body from a holistic point of view will also stand to you, especially if



you plan to have more babies down the line.”

POSITIVE BIRTH

To anybody preparing for birth, Kathy says to remember that no experience is the same. “The fact that women have the strength to birth babies is incredible. However, in terms of having a positive experience, for one woman it may be a Caesarean section, for another that may be a natural birth. It’s about what’s best at that time for you.

“I’ve experienced very different births and prepping my mind, and feeling confident in myself, helped me to have a positive experience for both. I let my body do what it needed to do, with the peace of mind that I was getting looked after. I found the ‘Gentle Birth’ app is a great tool for helping my mindset.”

Kathy says positive birth is achievable, no matter how

your baby is born, “We have to protect ourselves from the negative connotations that we so often see or hear about. That might be one woman’s story, but your birthing story hasn’t been told yet.

“Prepare yourself in the most positive way, and on the day, be aware of your choices. Be empowered with information and you’ll be able to handle whatever comes your way.”

Kathy adds, “And be super proud of yourself. Especially if expecting or birthing your baby during Covid-19. Don’t focus on the things that you can’t do right now, think of all that you are doing. You’re a new mum during a pandemic and what a story you’ll have to tell in the future! You’re doing a fantastic job!”

Visit bumpbabyandme.ie for more information on Kathy’s online and in-person services and workshops