

## Preparing as a couple for your first child

### A dad-to-be shares his experiences

‘Darling, can you come upstairs for a minute?’

It seems just like yesterday that I made it halfway up the stairs to see my wife looking down at me incredulously, her face a mixture of excitement, disbelief and trepidation. She had wonderful news to tell me: she was pregnant with our first child.

Preparing for what is sure to be a massive change to our relationship has, if anything, drawn us closer together. But it has also been testing at times. Suffice to say that the longer the pregnancy has gone on, the lower our collective capacity has become. Energy levels have dropped, different challenges have arisen and our emotions have become a little more ragged.

Not long after we found out about the pregnancy I came across this quote: ‘*The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother*’ Theodore Hesburgh.

As a husband and a dad-to-be, it has been an overwhelmingly positive period of my life and this quote encapsulates the reason why. In fact, I have taken it almost as a personal challenge – one that I have accepted even before our child is actually born.

One aspect of this has been how protective I have felt towards my wife. I hadn’t realised just *how* protective, however, until

the moment my obviously pregnant wife was unceremoniously barged past by a man in a crowded train carriage. My uncharacteristically assertive response (lambasting him in front of the other passengers), made me realise that she wasn’t the only person in our marriage adapting to pregnancy!

This desire to safeguard my wife has worked itself out at home as well. Energy I previously poured into following sport has now been channelled at unprecedented levels into domestic chores, DIY and anything else which encourages my wife to take the weight off her feet. She has enough to contend with as her body changes, sleep becomes disrupted and her energy levels drop without her husband also becoming a drain on her resources!

I have discovered that one of the best ways I can care for my wife in her pregnancy is to make sure that what matters to her, matters to me.

Between us, we have resolved that although so much of the pregnancy tends to understandably focus towards the mother-to-be, we are going to be in this together and I will be as involved as much as I possibly can be. I have made the effort to read the same books on birth and parenting and the effect has been twofold; we are in harmony as we learn the same things and I feel better-equipped for impending fatherhood.



It has not all been plain sailing. Whilst I have endeavoured to look after my wife as much as possible, the flip side of this has been I’ve been left physically drained at times and consequently more susceptible to getting tetchy. There’s no doubt about it, having a pregnant wife is hard work! It requires more energy, greater devotion, and all at a time where personally you have a huge amount to wrap your head around as fatherhood beckons.

We certainly haven’t done things perfectly – far from it in fact! To any other dads-to-be out there, I encourage you to get stuck in and become involved. If – like me – you’re not sure how to, chat it through with your partner and between you figure out the best way forward. So enjoy the challenge and be ready to make some mistakes along the way! Ultimately, be encouraged that preparing for the birth of a child is something you *can* do together.

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