

Marriage Milestones

THE FIRST CHILD



Hooray! The great day has arrived. The nursery has been painted pale lemon (okay for boy or girl). Your local Mothercare has almost sold out of disposable nappies and baby toiletries thanks to all your purchases. All the hopes of the past years have been realised. The little bundle of joy is here! What more could your marriage want?

There are wonderful joys associated with this event. But many couples find that a number of other related happenings occur. Rather than the sound of the patter of tiny feet, the baby will arrive with the subtlety of a thermonuclear explosion!

If you are the perfect couple and have a baby who will fit into your home without having to make any adjustment you need not read on. Alas, most of us are not! Some say that their life will not change – but this cannot be so for the following reasons.

THE BODY ZONE

- **The birth itself is a mammoth event taking a huge amount out of the mother.** It can take a while for her to recover. Hormones are triggered off which do not return to normal the next day.
- **Suddenly the closeness and time alone enjoyed by the happy couple can vanish overnight.** A baby is no respecter of desires for a quiet evening together or a good night's sleep. Tired people lead to tired sex – or in some cases to no sex. The mother may still be in some discomfort after giving birth. Many couples find that nights of passion are the last thing on their mind after weeks of broken nights and exhausting days. This is often more so for the mother. This can leave her husband both sexually frustrated and left out as mother and baby bond. Patience and understanding are both needed.
- **It should not be forgotten that some mothers suffer from post-natal depression that can continue for some time.** The girl the husband married may seem a long way off. Meanwhile she feels a hundred miles from the picture in her maternity catalogue. She has not had time to wash her hair. Her nice non-maternity clothes do not fit. His reassurance will be uplifting.

THE WORK ZONE

A major question is who will be left holding the baby? Even until the fairly recent past it was generally expected that the mother would stay at home. These days there is much higher expectation that she will go back to work. Yet studies show that a mother is now subject to great stress if she tries to juggle home and work. But if she stays at home, she may find that – after the stimulation of an interesting job – being at home all the time is not as much fun as she thought. Is part-time work possible?

THE MIND ZONE

What of the husband? He, who has been used to the attention of his wife when he comes home, now finds her up to her eyeballs in dirty nappies. He might become jealous and feel excluded. He might resent the fact that he has to do household chores at the end of a long day at work.

Breast-feeding, a wonderful way for mother and baby to bond, can lead to the husband feeling somewhat redundant. But he can help with nappy-changing!

And now of course you cannot go out without a babysitter. You will not have so much disposable income. You cannot go off for a weekend without the baby's clutter! But it is a joy to see baby grow.

THE FRIENDSHIP ZONE

Many couples find that once they become parents their friendships begin to change. They are not as free as they were, or it may be that their friends find an additional attention-seeking individual not quite what they had hoped for on a nice day out. You may feel drawn to others in the same boat as yourselves.

SO THEN

It is fantastic to have a baby of your own, but remember your firstborn will make a big difference to you relationship with each other and your relationships with others. So if you accept the fact that there will be many changes once you have your first child, you will actually enjoy you new family life more than before!

FINALLY

Most of us will have the car serviced regularly (if only for the MOT). What about marriage? Just as a car that is neglected is more likely to breakdown on the road, so is a neglected marriage more likely to end in divorce. How about giving your marriage a service?

To meet this need various marriage enhancement courses have been produced. **See the page "Marriage Enhancement" on the Marriage Resource website www.marriageresource.org.uk** . These courses are usually either provided by organisations on a residential weekend or a midweek break, or on a series of weeknights usually by a local church, both for their members and for non-members. These courses are designed to make any marriage better, whether or not there are problems. Do give your marriage a service – the benefits last for years!