

New Motherhood: Breaking the Silence and Exposing the Real Deal

Pregnancy can be a very *romantic* time. We pick out cute baby clothes; select fashionable baby gear and nursery furniture; and imagine the happy times ahead with our little one. But, for many of us, new motherhood is not what we expected it would be. New motherhood is often comprised of many overwhelming emotional and physical changes that we are unprepared for. Books, movies, and even friends often paint a rosy picture of the postpartum period. However, for most women, the early weeks (or months!) of parenting are not filled with blissful joy, but rather confusion, doubt, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. There is a lot of shame and guilt felt by women for whom things are not going along perfectly “as planned”. It is important for new moms to realize that they are not alone in their feelings.

The following “assumptions and realities” are intended to give voice to many of the unspoken issues faced by new moms and break the silence surrounding the realities of new motherhood.

Assumption: “I’ve been taking childbirth classes for weeks and I have a birth plan that details the birth I expect to have”.

Reality: While it’s important to prepare for childbirth, it is also important to realize that your birthing may take a different course than expected. Education instills confidence, so that you may ask questions and advocate for your needs in the face of any potential challenges. There are resources that can support mothers after the birth if the birth experience continues to impact them physically and emotionally.

Assumption: “I’m going to fall instantly in love with my baby...I already have!”

Reality: Not everyone feels “maternal” or in love immediately. That is OK. New parents are dealing with many changes in their lives and they need to be given space and support as they adjust to their new role.

Assumption: “I will definitely breastfeed my baby for at least a year. I know if I put the baby to the breast soon after delivery then breastfeeding will be easy and natural for us.”

Reality: Despite your best efforts and the support of lactation consultants, not every woman is able to breastfeed her baby. There may be latching issues, milk supply issues, or other health issues that interfere with nursing. Again, the outcome of a healthy baby & a healthy mama are what matter most.

Assumption: “Only women with a history of mental health issues experience post-partum depression.”

Reality: 90% of women experience the baby blues and 5-10% experience PPD.

Assumption: “My relationship with my friends won’t change after the baby arrives.”

Reality: While you will still keep your old friends, you won’t have as much time for phone chats or getting together. Some friends may feel disconnected from you as you embrace your new role as mother. Be prepared that relationships may change.

Assumption: “I don’t need a new moms’ group, I have plenty of friends with kids.”

Reality: Meeting with other new mothers, who can truly empathize with you, on a weekly basis is an invaluable resource during early motherhood. A new moms group offers information, resources, practical suggestions, reassurance, and social connection.