



HELP #1
CHILD WHEN
#2 ARRIVES

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Having a new baby arriving is a time of anticipation and expectation, but for older siblings, it can be a time of being unsettled. This can be seen in the older child being more clingy, worried, having meltdowns or 'behaviour' difficulties. These emotional or behaviour difficulties are often signs that your older child is struggling with the idea of adjusting to having a new little person in the house. They may not be sure of their role or position in the family or they may feel threatened that they won't get as much 'mummy or daddy time' or attention as they are used to.

IMPLEMENT KEY STRATEGIES TO HELP YOUR OLDER CHILD ADJUST BEFORE THE NEW BABY ARRIVES.

There are some key strategies that parents and grandparents can help implement before the new baby arrives to assist in the transition of a new baby arriving and the mental and practical adjustments that happen.

Here are five key ideas to help make the transition to having a newborn arrive home so that your toddler or older child is happier.

1. Involve your older child in the preparation before the birth. Help them to choose clothing or toys at the shop, involve them in looking through catalogues, looking at prams or equipment and talk to them in simple terms about the upcoming changes. For example, if you need to buy a new pram to accommodate the baby and toddler, talk to your toddler about why you need a new pram. This might sound like, 'We are looking for a new pram because when we go to the shop, we need to have a place for the baby to sleep and a place for you to sit. Look, the baby would lie down here and here is your very special new seat!'
2. If your toddler will be moving to a bigger bed to make way for the baby, plan the transition to the 'big bed' a couple of months before the baby arrives. Make a big deal about moving to a big bed and celebrate this. Making the transition beforehand is important so that your toddler does not feel like the baby is pushing them out of their safe space/bed as soon as they arrive home.
3. Before the baby arrives, start having some special one on one mummy, daddy or grandparent time, or 'dates'. Tell your toddler that these special times will happen now as well as after the new baby comes. You could put these events on a calendar so they can see them coming up. This helps the toddler to know that even though the baby is taking up lots of mum and dad's time, that there is still special time planned for them.
4. Buy your toddler a doll or teddy. This can be a special present from the new baby. Perhaps

wrap it up nicely and the baby can give it to them when they come to meet him or her. You can then use the doll or teddy for your toddler to look after when you are busy with the baby. They can pretend to feed, change their nappy and look after them.

5. Keep your toddler busy and involved in little jobs that are helpful to you. This could include asking them to pass a cloth or wrap when you are feeding or dressing, helping to bath the baby, folding up baby clothes or carrying dirty clothes from the bathroom to the laundry. Toddlers love to please and love to be helpful, so keep them busy with little age appropriate jobs and praise them for their help.

Having a newborn and a toddler is quite a daunting phase and is a steep learning curve for parents as well as little children. Explain new things to your child, keep a good weekly structure or routine with outings and make little pockets of time to connect regularly with your older child.



EDITOR'S CHOICE

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Deb Hopper, Occupational Therapist, author & workshop presenter. She is passionate about empowering parents and educators to understand the underlying reasons of why children struggle with behaviour, self-esteem and sensory processing difficulties. Deb is the co-author of the CD *Sensory Songs for Tots*, and author of *Reducing **Meltdowns and Improving Concentration: The Just Right Kids Technique Model***. Deb can be contacted via her [website](http://www.debhopper.com).

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