



5 Ways to Wellbeing

in the Perinatal Period

Connect

Connection with others is important for all human beings, but particularly so for new parents. While the transition to parenthood can be an amazing time in your life, it can also feel very lonely and isolating at times. As the saying goes, 'it takes a village to raise a child', so this first exercise gets you to think about your current village, and perhaps how to build one.

Who are your main sources of support currently?

This could be old or new friends, family members, professionals like your health visitor, your partner, or anyone else in your life:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

It might be helpful to think who you would reach out to in different situations; for example, who is best for emotional support? For practical advice? If you just need a laugh?

Can you commit to one 'Connect' goal this month?

It could be with or without baby; it might be meeting a friend for a walk, dedicating some time to your partner, or attending a local class or group:

What will I do?

What do I need in order to do it?

.....

When will I do it?

Time: **Date:** **Location:**

Get Active

During pregnancy, or post-birth (beyond your 6-week check, and once you feel able to do so), engaging in physical activity can be great for both your physical and mental wellbeing. It doesn't have to be something intense and high-impact – anything that gets your body moving can be beneficial.

Here are some ideas that can include baby:



Walking

Getting out for a walk with your baby in the pram or a sling/carrier can be helpful in lots of different ways – fresh air, exercise, and sunlight, to name a few. This could be along the coast, in your local park, or just around the block!

Where could you go for a walk? Is there somewhere nearby you've been meaning to visit?

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Swimming

Swimming can be a great low-impact exercise, that's also non-weight bearing, so avoids too much strain on your joints and ligaments (which have had to do a lot of hard work recently!). It's also something for baby to enjoy, too – although don't be too disheartened if they don't love it on the first try!

Where is your closest local pool, if you fancy trying swimming?

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Have a look on Information Now's website if you're not too sure:
www.informationnow.org.uk



Yoga

This is another lower-impact exercise that connects your breath, your body, and your mind. This could be through a pregnancy or baby/ toddler yoga class, of which there are plenty locally; or it could be something you do at home, using an online video or tutorial to guide you.

Here is a video on the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/pilates-and-yoga/prenatal-and-postnatal-exercise

The NHS website also has some helpful general information about exercising after having a baby:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/support-and-services/keeping-fit-and-healthy-with-a-baby

Take Notice

Learning to connect to the present moment can improve your wellbeing. This includes paying attention to your thoughts and feelings and 'internal world', but also taking notice of the physical world around you.

This links to the practice of 'mindfulness', which you can learn more about here: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/what-is-mindfulness

Journalling

Try writing down your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to things, which can give you space to process them, and help you to understand your triggers and patterns. There are lots of different ways to journal, but an idea is to start to pay attention to the below:



Situation

Jot down the situation that you're reflecting on (what, where, when)



Thoughts

Notice what sort of thoughts you found yourself having – any worries, beliefs, images, memories that surfaced, etc.



Feelings

Record any feelings, both emotions and physical sensations, that came up for you (e.g. upset, irritable, anxious, tense, etc)



Behaviours

Start to notice what you did, or didn't do, as a result of how you felt. This can help you to identify habits or patterns you may have.

Sensory Grounding

This can be a useful technique to bring you back into the present moment, and to help you to connect with the physical world around you, using your 5 senses.

Take a deep, calming breath to start.

5

name 5 things you can **see** around you; a car, a pigeon, a tree, a lamppost, an armchair.

4

name 4 things you can **feel**, such as your clothing on your skin, your foot inside your shoe, the surface you are sitting on.

3

listen for 3 sounds you can **hear** – rain on the window, traffic in the distance, the hum of the fridge.

2

find 2 things to **smell** if you can (your baby's clothes, a perfume you love), or focus on 2 smells that bring you comfort.

1

find something to **taste** if you can (such as a mint), or imagine your favourite taste or flavour.

Learn

Parenthood can be a huge (and sometimes steep!) learning curve. There are lots of different places to access information that can help you on your journey; for example, your health visitor/midwife, lactation consultant, parent and baby groups, the internet, social media pages, books, podcasts, and more! Sometimes the amount of information available can be overwhelming, so it's important to find support and resources that feel right for you and your baby.

What are the 3 most important things you've learned since becoming pregnant/ a parent, or the top 3 pieces of advice you would give to a new parent/ parent-to-be?

What's one area of pregnancy or parenthood you feel a bit unsure about, struggle with, or would like to learn more about?

1

2

3

Your Health Visitor can be a great source of information and support.

Give (...to yourself!)

Parenthood can be very demanding, with baby needing a lot of our time and attention. While of course that's part of the job, it can take its toll if we aren't balancing this out with some space for self-care. For that reason, we are encouraging you to give something back to yourself - to carve out a little you-time, amongst the daily (and nightly!) demands you are likely facing.

Self-care looks different for everyone, but ultimately, it's something that fills your cup back up, rather than drains it; as they say, you can't pour from an empty cup!

What is one self-care activity that you have been neglecting lately?

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**Can you make a commitment to making time for it over the next month?
Schedule it like an appointment with yourself!**

Time: **Date:** **Location:**

Who can watch baby for me? (If appropriate):

What is something you really valued before becoming a parent? (A hobby, interest, activity?)

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Is there a way you can re-introduce this (or a modified version of this) back into your life?

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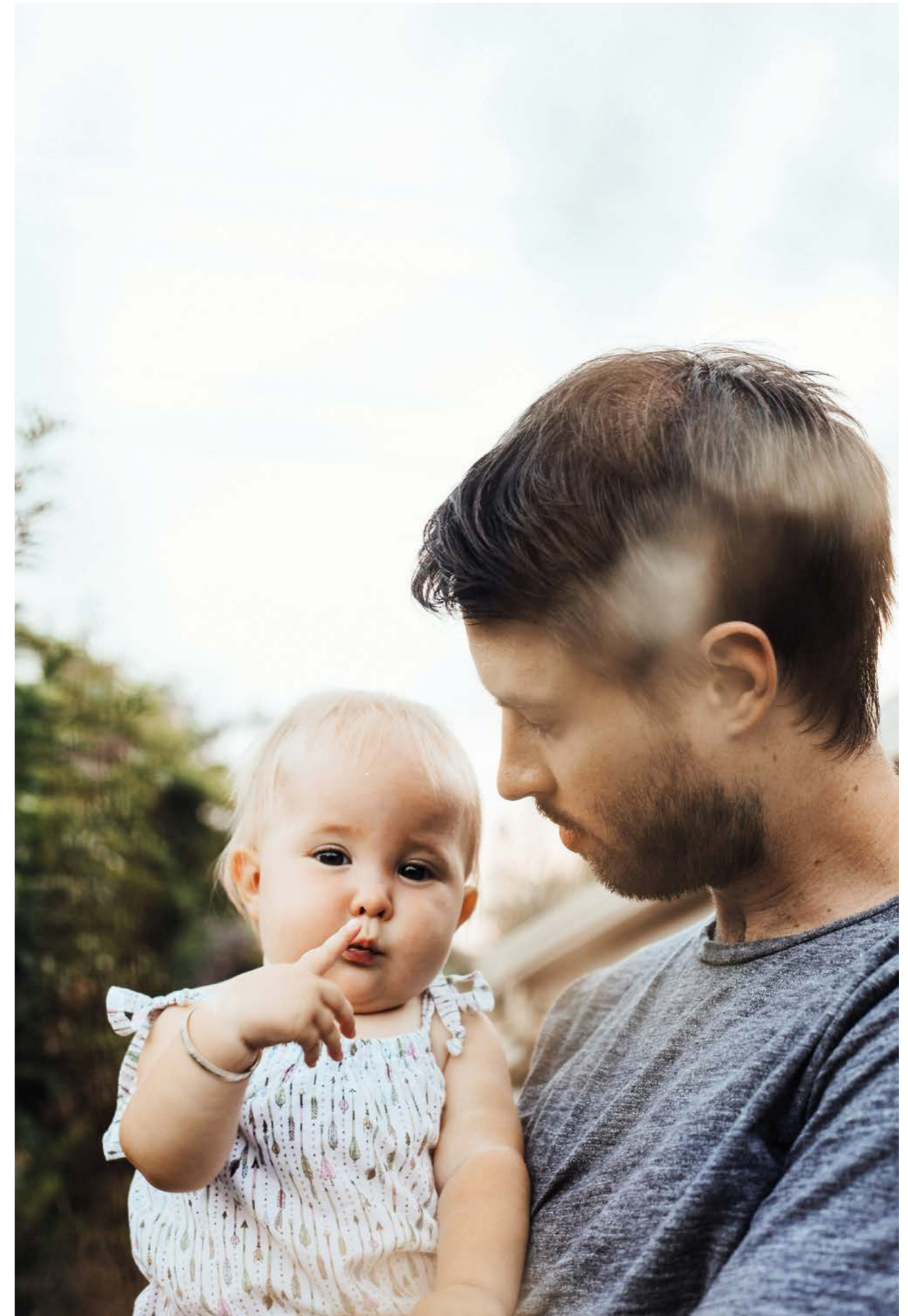
If you'd like to learn more, here is a link to some evidence for the 5 ways to Wellbeing:
www.neweconomics.org/2011/07/five-ways-well-new-applications-new-ways-thinking

Of course parenthood can be an emotional rollercoaster, and some days will be more challenging than others. However, if the symptoms below are bothering you, and have been happening on more days than not, it might be worth getting in touch with us for some support.

- A loss of interest or pleasure in your normal activities
- Feeling more low, tearful, anxious, or irritable than usual
- Changes to your appetite
- Sleep disturbances (e.g. not being able to sleep even when baby is sleeping)
- Negative thoughts about yourself or the future, or lots of worries
- Restlessness or difficulty concentrating
- Distressing thoughts about something happening to your baby

If you are having thoughts of not wanting to be here anymore, or wanting to hurt yourself in some way, it's important to reach out for support:

- An emergency appointment with your GP
- **Call 111** and select the 'mental health' option
- Present at A&E or call **999 in an emergency**



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