

BECOMING A PARENT

ACTIVITIES FOR EDUCATORS

**PREPARED FOR
ADVANCED CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION WORKSHOP
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ALL ACTIVITIES IN THIS BOOKLET:

- have been **designed to stand alone**. Each activity has a set of instructions and the activities can be used independently or in combination with others in the booklet.
- **cover a parenting issue**. The majority can be used either in a program or as a take home activity to stimulate discussion and interest in parenting. You need to think about the needs of the participants and the time available in the program/session before you select the activities you will use.
- **should be of interest to male and female participants**. To foster peer support and sharing of ideas, concerns and interests I recommend single gender, small groups for several of the activities. The composition of the small groups can, however, be changed as required.
- **can be used at any stage of the pregnancy**. Monitor the needs of your group and integrate the activities as appropriate. Life Journey is very useful for Early Pregnancy programs.
- may be **appropriate or they can be adapted for special needs groups**. The language used in the activities should allow them to be used in age or culture specific groups.
- have been **designed for a group of 20 people** as this is the average size of antenatal education groups in Australia. If your groups differ in size, adjust the activities so you have 4-6 participants in a small group.
- **have an aim, the materials required are listed, time allocation is given, the method of facilitation is stated and a predicted outcome is given**. The time allocated to each activity is provided as a guide. As you become more familiar with the activities and the needs of the participants, you should vary the time according to your needs and theirs.

The outcomes of the activities have been described as 'predicted' because they are based on the outcomes I have experienced in antenatal programs. Adult learners are fun to work with, but they can be unpredictable so you may find the outcomes from your groups are quite different.

Several of the activities in this book have been adapted from activities I have learned from other educators. The source of the original activity being unknown.

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LIFE JOURNEY

Aim of Activity:

To make expectant parents aware of the need to plan for events they may experience as a new parent, during the pregnancy.

Materials Required:

'Life Journey' sheets, pens and highlighter pens
Life Journey educator trigger sheet

Time Allocation:

Small group discussion = 10 minutes
Large group feedback and discussion = 10 minutes

Method:

Divide the large group into two groups. Give each group a 'Life Journey' sheet and a pen. Tell each group to draw a vertical line through the path somewhere on the sheet. The line represents the birth, with the area to the left of the line being the pregnancy and the area to the right being life after the birth.

The groups are to discuss events they may encounter along the journey from pregnancy to life with a new baby. They are to write the events, such as the ones listed on the educator trigger sheet, along the path.

When they have entered all the events they can think of, ask the group to mark with highlighter pen the events they should consider / organise / act upon during the pregnancy.

Allow 10 minutes for discussion. Close the group activity with a spokesperson from each group presenting their 'Life Journey' sheet to the large group.

Complete the activity with a large group discussion about:

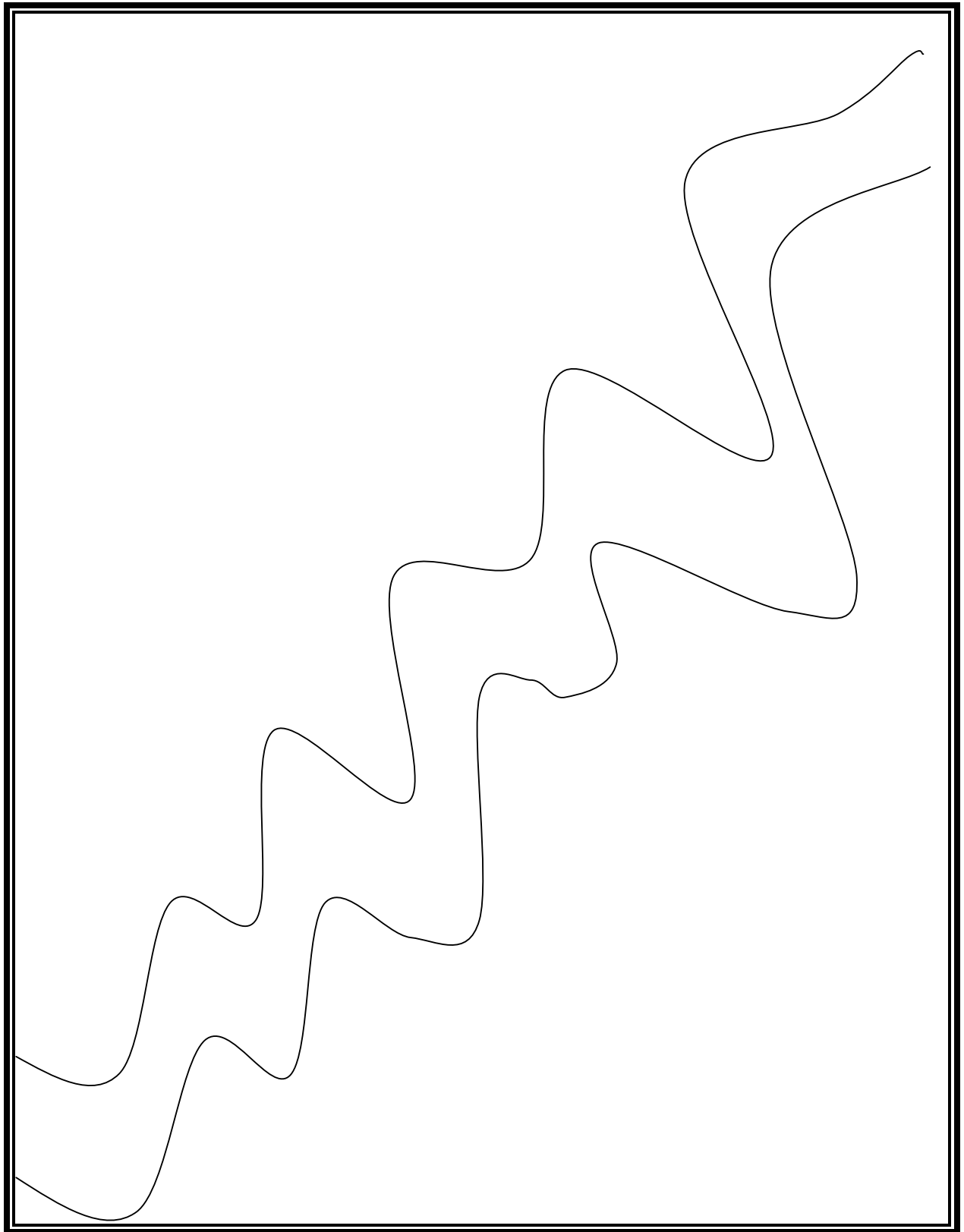
- the events they may encounter along the path;
- how and why they may need to prepare for these events during the pregnancy.

Encourage further exploration of the resources available to expectant and new parents in their local area.

Predicted Outcome:

Irrespective of the stage of pregnancy that this is given, expectant parents should be able to list a range of events they may encounter. Participants, however, may not be aware of the need to plan for events, such as childcare, during the pregnancy. This activity should arouse their awareness.

LIFE JOURNEY SHEET



LIFE JOURNEY EDUCATOR TRIGGER SHEET

The following are a list of events that may be experienced during the pregnancy or as a parent. You may need to give a few examples to the group as they begin the activity.

Family arriving from interstate or overseas

Second ultrasound required

Aquarobics

Begin antenatal yoga

Partner away for work

Baby shower

Doctor goes on holidays

Sister's wedding

Partner promoted – move interstate

Return to work

Fly to Perth with baby

Mother's 60th birthday

Christening

Christmas celebrations

Easter weekend

Wedding anniversary

Begin 'Having a Baby' program

Home renovations begin

Stop smoking

Wash baby clothes

Buy equipment for the nursery

And many more.....

FEARS AND CONCERNS

Aim of Activity:

Through the expression of fears and a consideration of the reason for having them participants should recognise the importance of open communication as a stress reduction strategy.

Materials Required:

Paper and pens

Time Allocation:

Individual work and small group discussion = 15 minutes

Large group feedback and discussion = 10 minutes

Method:

Give each participant a sheet of paper and a pen. Ask them to list, on the paper, 3 things they fear the most about becoming a mother / father.

Divide the large group into two single gender groups. Ask the groups to discuss their responses, list the main fears on a sheet of paper and list the reasons for the fears. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting their responses to the large group. Follow the presentations with a general discussion about fears and concerns which may be experienced by expectant parents and the reasons for them. Encourage an expression of fears and concerns and remind them of the community resources available to parents.

Predicted Outcome:

The level to which fears will be expressed can depend upon a number of factors, including the level of trust in a group. You may find that more will be expressed as the group get to know each other.

GAINS AND LOSSES

Aim of Activity:

To make expectant parents realise that there will be gains and losses when they become a parent and that some will be positive, others negative.

Materials Required:

Paper and pens

Time Allocation:

Small group discussion = 10 minutes

Large group feedback and discussion = 10 minutes

Method:

Divide the large group into two single gender groups. Give each group some paper and a pen. Ask them to discuss the following questions and write their responses on the paper. Allow 10 minutes for the discussion.

Questions:

- As a mother / father there are gains and losses. What are some of the gains?
- What are some of the losses?

Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting the list to the large group. Complete the activity with a large group discussion about the gains and losses that may be experienced by mothers and fathers, how they feel about them and what they can do to prepare for them.

Predicted Outcome:

Expectant parents are normally aware of some of the losses they may experience, such as a night's sleep, but they may not have thought that some of the losses could be positive, such as giving up full time work. This activity should stimulate discussion amongst participants and a sharing of ideas.

DOES SHE / HE REALLY NEED IT?

Aim of Activity:

To encourage participants to think about the resources a new baby requires and the expense they can incur if they are not informed.

Materials Required:

'Equipment and Clothing for Baby' list

Time Allocation:

This is a take home activity. Allow 3 minutes to discuss the activity in one session and 10 minutes for feedback in a subsequent session.

Method:

At the end of a session tell participants they have an activity to complete prior to the next session. Distribute the 'Equipment and Clothing for Baby' list to participants. They are to read the list and answer the questions listed below. They are to present the answers to the large group during a subsequent session.

Questions:

- What equipment and clothing do you think is essential for a new baby?
- Where can you get this equipment and clothing?
- How much will it cost?

Predicted Outcome:

Participants will have a range of ideas of what equipment and clothing is required for a baby and they will be able to exchange ideas of where / how they can obtain it. Cost comparisons will enlighten everyone, including the facilitator.

'Equipment and Clothing for Baby'

Recommended	Maybe	Not recommended
Cot	Bath	Baby walker
Firm, well fitting mattress	Change table	Jolly jumper
2-3 sets of cot sheets	Bassinet	Pillow
Mattress protector	Sling	Cot bumper
Cotton/wool blankets	Sheep skin	Quilt
6 singlets – size 00	Plastic pilchers	Hammock
3 dozen cloth nappies	Playpen	Bean bags
Nappy pins/snappy	Food processor	Baby cosmetics
6 jumpsuits		Colic remedies
3 day outfits		
6 wraps		
Hat		
Towelling bibs		
Face cloths		
Nappy bucket		
Clothes airer/dryer		
Stroller/pram		
Car restraint		

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Aim of Activity:

To raise awareness of the community resources available to new parents.

Materials Required:

Parents Help List

Time Allocation:

This is a take home activity. Allow 3 minutes to discuss the activity in one session and 10 minutes for feedback in a subsequent session.

Method:

At the end of a session tell participants they have an activity to complete prior to the next session. Distribute the 'Parents Help List' and allocate one of the named resources to each pair. They are to investigate the resource and answer the questions listed below. They are to present the answers to the large group during a subsequent session.

Questions:

- Where in your local area is the resource located?
- What services does the resource provide?
- How do you access it?
- Do you have to pay for the service?
- Does it provide other services? If yes, what are they?

Predicted Outcome:

Participants may not be aware of the community resources available to new parents in their area. This should raise their awareness.

Parents Help List

Keep this handy – near the phone or on the refrigerator

24 Hour Telephone Advisory/Counselling Services

Tresillian.....

Karitane.....

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Australian Multiple Birth Association

Child Protection and Family Crisis Service

Poisons Information Service

New Children's Hospital KIDSNET

General Practitioner

Early Childhood Health Centre

Family Planning Centre

LIFE WILL BE.....

Aim of Activity:

To encourage an expression of feelings about motherhood and fatherhood and the reason for their feelings.

Note: There are several methods by which this activity can be presented to a group. Two are given below.

Time Allocation:

Individual work and small group discussion = 15 minutes

Large group feedback and discussion = 10 minutes

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Method One = Learner - Centred**Materials Required:**

Paper and pens

Method:

Give each participant a sheet of paper and a pen. Ask them to write their response to the appropriate trigger on the paper.

Triggers:

- As a mother life will be.....
- As a father life will be.....

Divide the large group into two single gender groups. Ask the groups to discuss their responses, list key words on a sheet of paper and list the reasons for their responses. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting their responses to the large group. Follow the presentations with a general discussion about life as a mother / father, how they feel about it and what, if anything, they can do to prepare themselves.

.....

Method Two = Teacher - Centred**Materials Required:**

Sheet of words and pens

Method:

Give each participant a sheet of words, such as the example below, and ask them to circle the words that 'describe' their response to the appropriate trigger.

Triggers:

- As a mother life will be.....
- As a father life will be.....

Divide the large group into two single gender groups. Ask the groups to share their responses, list key words on a sheet of paper and list the reasons for their responses. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting their responses to the large group. Follow the presentations with a general discussion about life as a mother / father, how they feel about it and what, if anything, they can do to prepare themselves.

Predicted Outcome:

The choice of words used to describe life can depend upon a number of factors, including the level of trust in a group. You may find that words such as daunting, challenging, isolating will be expressed as the group get to know each other.

SHEET OF WORDS			
DAUNTING	EXHILARATING	AMAZING	
CHALLENGING	REWARDING	PUNISHING	
STIMULATING	PASSIONATE	REASSURING	
ISOLATING	LONELY	REFRESHING	
FUNNY	INTERESTING	EXHAUSTING	COLOURFUL
FULL OF SURPRISES	NEVER DULL	TIRING	

FEELING....

Aim of Activity:

To give expectant parents an understanding of some of the feelings they may have as a new parent, why they may have the feeling and what they can do to reduce it.

Materials Required:

Feeling.... Trigger cards
Paper and pens

Time Allocation:

Small group discussion = 10 minutes
Large group feedback and discussion = 15 minutes

Method:

Divide the large group into four groups. Give each group a 'Feeling....' trigger card, some paper and a pen. Ask each group to discuss the comment on their card, answer the questions and summarise their answers on the paper. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting the list to the large group. Follow each presentation with a large group discussion about the comment, emphasise the reason/s for the comment and add any strategies not listed by the group.

Predicted Outcome:

Participants may not have thought about the reasons for these comments before, but when asked they should be able to list a number of reasons and what they can do about the situation.

FEELING.... TRIGGER CARDS

As a new parent you will feel constantly tired.

List possible reasons for feeling this way?

What may help decrease this feeling?

As a new parent you may feel isolated.

List possible reasons for feeling this way?

What may help decrease this feeling?

As a new parent you may feel anything but sexy.

List possible reasons for feeling this way?

What may help decrease this feeling?

**As a new parent you may find that there are times when your baby
won't settle or sleep.**

List possible reasons for this happening?

What could you do to settle your baby?

SUPPORT NETWORK

Aim of Activity:

To make participants aware of the need for a support network in the early postnatal weeks and who could be included.

Materials Required:

Paper and pens

Time Allocation:

15 minutes

Method:

Give each participant a sheet of paper and a pen. Ask them to draw a flower with six large petals, radiating from a central circle. An example is provided below. In the circle they are to write the words mother, father, baby. In each petal they are to write the name of a person they could contact when or if they need support or help in the first 4 – 6 weeks after the birth of their baby. For example, who would they contact if they need a babysitter or if they feel as though they need time out from their baby. Allow 5 minutes for the completion of the flowers.

Ask couples to compare their flowers and complete the activity with a large group discussion on who can provide support or help to parents with a new baby and when it may be required. Divide the whiteboard into two columns, with one column titled 'Possible Supports' and the other 'When Required'. Ask participants for their response to the following questions:

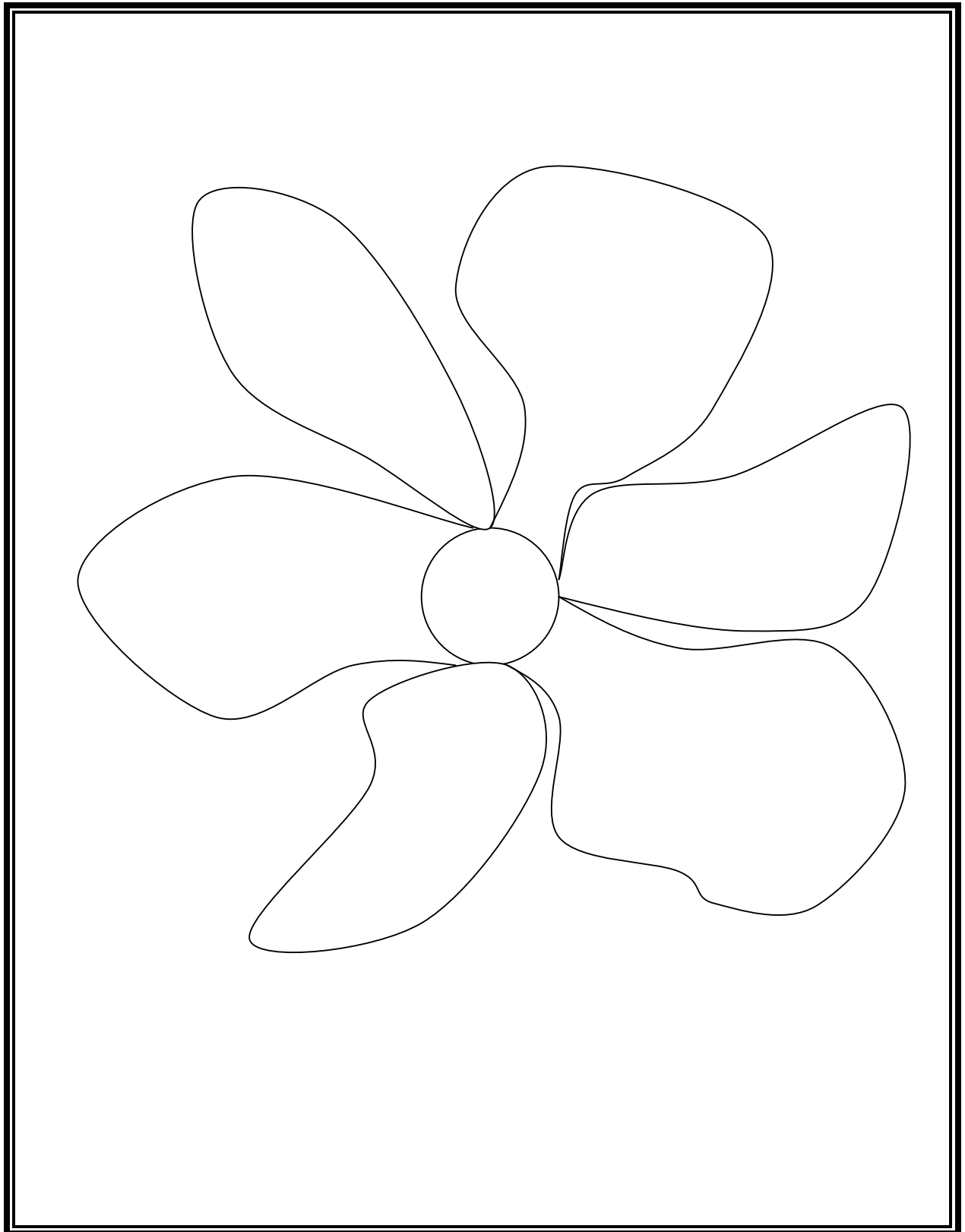
- Who could you contact when or if you need support or help in the first 4 – 6 weeks?
- When do you think support or help may be required?

Write the responses under the appropriate heading on the whiteboard. 'Possible Supports' could include their parents, siblings, friends, other new mothers / fathers, church groups, Early Childhood Centre, NMAA, local hospital, Family Care Cottages, Day Care Centres. 'When Required' could include time out, dinner at a restaurant, a cocktail party, to go to the gym, shopping, hair dresser, massage, doctor.

Predicted Outcome:

This activity should stimulate an active discussion about who can provide support and help in the early postnatal weeks and when a newborn can be separated from his / her parents. Issues such as when a baby can be taken to a restaurant / café, how new mothers can get time out from the baby and what role family and friends can play may arise.

SUPPORT NETWORK SHEET



WHAT DOES EVERYONE SAY?

Aim of Activity:

To give expectant parents an appreciation of the effect a new baby will have on their life and what they can do to prepare for this life change.

Materials Required:

Friends and Parents Trigger cards

Paper and pens

Newspaper articles for large group discussion

Time Allocation:

Small group discussion = 10 minutes

Large group feedback and discussion = 15 minutes

Method:

Divide the large group into four, single gender groups. Give each group a trigger card, some paper and a pen.

- Two of the groups, one male and one female, are to brainstorm and list on paper their response to the 'Friends' trigger card.
- The other two groups, one male and one female, are to brainstorm and list on paper their response to the 'Parents' trigger card.

Allow 10 minutes for discussion. Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting the list to the large group.

Complete the activity with a large group discussion about:

- what friends, family and the media say about life with a new baby;
- the reason they say what they do;
- whether the comments are valid;
- what expectant parents can do to prepare themselves for the changes in their life that may occur.

Encourage further exploration of this issue.

Predicted Outcome:

Participants should be able to list what they have heard about life with a new baby, but they may not have discussed how their life could change and what they can do to prepare themselves.

WHAT DOES EVERYONE SAY? - TRIGGER CARDS

FRIENDS

What have friends with young children told you about life with a new baby?

How do you feel about what they say? Do you think it is true?

What can you do to prepare yourself before your baby is born?

PARENTS

What have your parents told you about life with a new baby?

How do you feel about what they say? Do you think it is true?

What can you do to prepare yourself before your baby is born?

PARENTING NOW

Aim of Activity:

To give expectant parents an understanding of the challenges they face as a parent in the 21st century and what they can do to reduce the effect of these challenges.

Materials Required:

Parenting Now Trigger cards

Paper and pens

Parenting Now Educator Trigger Sheet

Time Allocation:

Small group discussion = 10 minutes

Large group feedback and discussion = 15 minutes

Method:

Divide the large group into two single gender groups. Give each group a trigger card, some paper and a pen.

- The women are to brainstorm and list on paper their response to the 'Mothers – to – be' trigger card.
- The men are to brainstorm and list on paper their response to the 'Fathers – to - be' trigger card.

Allow 10 minutes for discussion. Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting the list to the large group.

Complete the activity with a large group discussion about:

- the challenges faced by new parents in the 21st century;
- how and why these are different from those faced by their parents;
- what they can do to prepare for these challenges.

Encourage further exploration of the challenges.

Predicted Outcome:

Participants may not be aware of the challenges they face as a new parent, unless they have family or friends with young children. You may need to trigger their thoughts by giving 2 –3 examples from the 'Parenting Now' Trigger Sheet.

PARENTING NOW - TRIGGER CARDS

MOTHERS – TO - BE

What challenges do you face as a new mother?

Are these challenges different from those faced by the previous generation?

If yes, why are they?

What can you do to prepare yourself for them?

FATHERS – TO - BE

What challenges do you face as a new father?

Are these challenges different from those faced by the previous generation?

If yes, why are they?

What can you do to prepare yourself for them?

PARENTING NOW - EDUCATOR TRIGGER SHEET

There are many challenges new parents face in the 21st century, which differ from those faced by their parents. The list below is generic and not exhaustive – there are many more that would be specific to your local area.

Expectation that I will be a good mother / father

Waiting lists for child care

My parents are working – they won't be able to baby sit

Lack of extended family

Reduced income – mortgage to pay - ? need to return to work

Mixed marriage – religion or culture

Our instant society – everything must be quick and easy

Lack of challenges in life prior to having a baby

Complacency – deal with it later attitude

Changes in where they get their information from – media and internet

Grandparents not relating to current way of life – criticism

Perceived peer pressure to have status symbols

THIS BABY COULD BE.....

Aim of Activity:

To give expectant parents an understanding of ways babies express themselves and what to do in a range of situations.

Materials Required:

A range of baby photos

Time Allocation:

Small group discussion = 10 minutes

Large group feedback and discussion = 15 minutes

Method:

Divide the large group into two groups. Give each group a range of baby photos and ask them to provide responses to the following triggers for each photograph. Allow 10 minutes for discussion.

Trigger:

- This baby could be.....
- How do you know?
- What could you do?

Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting the responses to each photograph to the large group.

Complete the activity with a large group discussion about how babies express what they need, how they feel and what, if anything, parents should do to meet these needs.

Predicted Outcome:

Participants should be able to suggest a range of ideas as to what the babies are 'saying'. They may, however, not know how to react in each situation.

TAKE A STAND

Aim of Activity:

To familiarise expectant parents with some of the issues they may face as a mother / father and encourage further exploration of topical issues.

Materials Required:

'Take a Stand' sheets

Pens

Time Allocation:

15 minutes

Method:

Give the women a 'Take a Stand – Mother to be' sheet and the men a 'Take a Stand – Partner' sheet and a pen. Ask them to complete the sheet as per the instructions. Complete the activity with couples comparing their responses. Encourage further discussion of these issues.

Predicted Outcome:

Participants may not have thought about several of these issues, so they may not be able to give a response. Encourage them to do so with the understanding that they should discuss it later.

TAKE A STAND - MOTHERS – TO - BE

This exercise is to familiarise you with some of the issues that you may face as a mother. It will allow you to see issues you already hold strong beliefs about, ones where your ideas are similar to those of your partner and those you need to explore further as a couple.

React to each statement with an agree (+), disagree (-), or undecided (?). When complete compare answers with your partner.

Mother-to-be

- _____ Parenting is an instinctive skill.
- _____ Babies should sleep in their own beds.
- _____ Babies should have their own room.
- _____ Breastfeeding is more convenient.
- _____ Mothers should have the major childcare responsibility.
- _____ Babies should sleep with their parents.
- _____ It's okay to breastfeed in public.
- _____ Boy babies should not wear pink clothes.
- _____ Immunisation is necessary for every child's good health.
- _____ Everyone should be quiet when the baby is asleep.
- _____ Boy babies should not be circumcised.
- _____ Babies need to cry it out sometimes.
- _____ Commercial baby food is nutritious for babies.
- _____ Breastfeeding should continue as long as the baby wants.
- _____ Parents should not make love in the same room the baby is in.
- _____ Dummies are not good for babies.
- _____ Disposable nappies are not good for babies.

TAKE A STAND - PARTNERS

This exercise is to familiarise you with some of the issues that you may face as a mother. It will allow you to see issues you already hold strong beliefs about, ones where your ideas are similar to those of your partner and those you need to explore further as a couple.

React to each statement with an agree (+), disagree (-), or undecided (?). When complete compare answers with your partner.

Partner

- | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ | Parenting is an instinctive skill. |
| _____ | Babies should sleep in their own beds. |
| _____ | Babies should have their own room. |
| _____ | Breastfeeding is more convenient. |
| _____ | Mothers should have the major childcare responsibility. |
| _____ | Babies should sleep with their parents. |
| _____ | It's okay to breastfeed in public. |
| _____ | Boy babies should not wear pink clothes. |
| _____ | Immunisation is necessary for every child's good health. |
| _____ | Everyone should be quiet when the baby is asleep. |
| _____ | Boy babies should not be circumcised. |
| _____ | Babies need to cry it out sometimes. |
| _____ | Commercial baby food is nutritious for babies. |
| _____ | Breastfeeding should continue as long as the baby wants. |
| _____ | Parents should not make love in the same room the baby is in. |
| _____ | Dummies are not good for babies. |
| _____ | Disposable nappies are not good for babies. |

All I Need Is.....

Aim of Activity:

To give expectant parents an understanding of the needs of a mother, father and a baby in the early postnatal weeks, why they have the needs and how they can be met.

Materials Required:

Paper and pens

Time Allocation:

Small group discussion = 10 minutes

Large group feedback and discussion = 15 minutes

Method:

Divide the large group into three groups – group one is the mother, group two is the father and group three is the baby. Give each group some paper and a pen. Ask them to discuss the following triggers according to the group they are in and write their responses on the paper. That is the mothers look at the needs of the mother, the fathers at the needs of the fathers and the babies at the needs of the baby.

Trigger:

- As a new mother / father / baby I will need...
- I have these needs because...
- To meet these needs I ...

Allow 10 minutes for discussion. Close the discussions with a spokesperson from each group presenting the responses to the large group. Follow the presentations with a general discussion about the needs of the mother, father and the baby and how these needs can be met. Emphasise the importance of postnatal support and give participants a list of resources they may like to access.

Predicted Outcome:

Participants may not have thought of their specific needs in the postnatal period. This activity should stimulate interest in the resources available to new parents.