



daydreaming

Newborns zap your zzzs. Here's why you need to reclaim them.

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In January, more than two months after giving birth to her first baby boy, Benjamin, Jane Katner was attempting to return to her pre-baby lifestyle. She had just begun working part-time and was planning on joining a yoga class again, albeit with her new baby this time around.

But with Benjamin sleeping in three-hour increments and Jane still breastfeeding, she says it's hard to get enough sleep to function at all.

"There are days when I feel like I'm not keeping my sanity, and I'm not getting enough sleep," says the Lakefront mom. "It's hard to focus. It's hard to concentrate. I have no memory whatsoever. I'm irritable and short-tempered as my husband and stepsons will tell you. Not sleeping makes everything more difficult."

Jane isn't alone.

According to the Washington, D.C.-based National Sleep Foundation, 42 percent of postpartum women reported last year that they rarely or never got a good night's sleep. When asked what contributes to the sleepless nights, 90 percent of them said caring for their child.

Dr. L. Paul du Treil, an OB/GYN with Touro Infirmary, says the key to getting enough sleep is adapting to your baby's sleep pattern and relying on offered support from family and friends.

"They should maintain a good support system at home if possible. Involve their husband in sharing duties," says Dr. du Treil. "Share duties with dad at night for diaper changes and feedings if bottle feeding. Get as much rest during the day while the baby is down."

Houma mom Claudia Sechrest says she and her husband became "shift workers" when they began taking care of their newborn, Noah, who was born in October.

"I would get the night shift, and my husband got the day

shift," says Sechrest, who pumped breast milk for her husband to feed the baby during the day. "I would get enough sleep during the day and when I woke up, his shift ended and mine began."

But when her husband returned to work offshore, Claudia found herself taking care of Noah alone. She didn't want to burden her family and friends by asking them for help.

"At first I was like, 'No I don't need help, everything is OK,'" says Claudia. "But as the days and weeks progressed more, I felt like it got more difficult. Now I'll take anyone's offer."

Jane and her husband also began to care for their newborn in shifts, but the couple learned early on to accept help from their families.

"My mother and my mother-in-law were wonderful," she says. "They were totally here for the first two weeks helping me. They would take the baby and we would go back to sleep."

Jane also has learned to sleep when Benjamin sleeps.

"When he goes back to sleep in the morning, I go back with him," she says. "I try to nap with him during the day. I might get a 20 minute to an hour nap in the afternoon or early evening if I'm lucky...once I get him changed and fed and back to sleep, I crash."

While sleep is the most important part of functioning as a new parent, it's often hard for new moms to rationalize sleeping instead of utilizing baby-sleeping time doing housework, paying bills and working out. Instead they opt to care for their newborns and get as much sleep as possible.

Moms say it often leads to feelings of guilt, inadequacy and a loss of control.

"I do feel guilty," says Jane. "It doesn't feel good not to be able to get the laundry done and the dishes washed and put away. I feel like I'm not spending enough time with my 12-

year-old stepson. I'm starting to work part-time but I feel like I'm not bringing in enough income. I feel guilty that I haven't been able to make it to things I want to do with the baby, but it's just difficult to get moving in the morning."

When asked if she included cleaning and working out into her new mommy schedule, Claudia chuckles.

"Yeah, cleaning and working out...no time for that. Absolutely no time."



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Becky Hammond, a Slidell mother of Jenna, three, and Joey, six, says having children changes your perspective on life.

"All of a sudden you have this little life that you have to take care of, and no longer can you drop everything and go out," says Becky. "But I always kept in perspective that this is a child that I brought into this world that loves me unconditionally. That helped to remind me that I would do anything for my

children. Then, I would take a deep breath and try to handle whatever situation was at hand... If I were a new mom today, my advice would be to learn your baby's patterns and habits as early as you can and adjust your routine to your baby's."

Dr. du Treil says it is important for new moms to take time out for themselves and exercise, which will help them sleep better and maintain their sanity.

"Get outdoors if possible for brisk walks to break the seclusion of being inside with the new baby," says Dr. du Treil. "Exercise will help both mentally and physically but often is last on the list of daily activities with a newborn. Taking a little time for yourself each day when possible goes a long way to preserving emotional and mental health."

With 20 percent of postpartum women reporting to the NSF that they have driven drowsy with children in the car, new moms

should try to get as much sleep as possible for both their safety and their children's safety.

"If I had advice for new moms, I would say absolutely, definitely try to nap when the baby is napping," Jane says. "Forget about the housework, turn off the phones and give yourself an environment where you're not disturbed. You don't want to fall asleep while holding the baby or driving." ❁