



### Two become Three

I am sure that you both, especially the future dad, is getting used to the quip, 'Life will never be the same again.' Although spoken in jest nothing could be truer. The introduction of a third person into a twosome always changes the dynamics and the arrival of a baby ushers in a lifestyle with constantly changing dynamics. Challenges and obstacles will hopefully become your friends not your enemies. The demands on your time, pocket and wisdom will be with you for a long time because the child- parent relationship lasts for life.



There is a unique link between you all even before baby is born. Mum carries baby for 40 weeks and in that time baby, as he develops, becomes acclimatised to the warm, snug, safe cocoon of mum's womb. Baby is aware of mummy sounds, her tummy rumbles, voice, breathing and heartbeat. Daddy's contact with mummy, his voice talking to his unborn offspring, planting a kiss goodnight on mum's tummy and giving her tummy a comforting little rub is important too. No one has to teach a baby who Mummy and an involved Daddy are. The key word is 'involved' Daddy. There can be a wonderful togetherness as the hospital visits become the topic of every conversation and all baby items, large and small are purchased. Some couples have had to buy a more baby-friendly car.

When baby arrives on the scene, three people are occupying the space and time that two people did. In fact, this tiny baby takes up more room and time in a day to do the mundane things, such as eating, sleeping, having ablutions done, than the parents do because he is entirely dependent upon someone else to do them for him. There is precious little time to do your own thing when it has taken so long to look after a baby's needs first. He will also frequently cut across the routines and pleasurable outlets that parents now never seem to have the time for. Baby's demands are made with incessant crying and an unreasonable demand for attention, whether it be for food, changing or cuddling. Unfortunately, with some babies, sleep does not seem to be one of their demands. By far the worst demand is an incessant crying and refusal to yield to any amount of comfort.

The sooner it registers with baby's parents that a much longed for little baby is ruling the roost the sooner they will introduce and establish some defining of roles into their threesome. The result of this will bring hope that happy families can be enjoyed amidst the everyday pressure situations. 'Two's company and three's a crowd' will be played out time and time again when couples start their families and as the families grow up.

It is so important that couples never lose that first love that drew them together. Remember the little things that each one did for the other. You may still remember when time stood still, when you couldn't wait to meet up to do something simple or exciting. The time you both took to dress up, look good, keep fit. Time to hold hands, talk or not talk, laugh until you cried. Buy a bunch of flowers, have a take-away because a meal out was too expensive - or settle for a bag of crisps. Lie-ins and late nights, weekend breaks and extravagant shopping excursions or holidays may have to be put on hold. The challenge is what can they be replaced with? Babies, children and teenagers, by nature, love to be in the centre. They should never be a wedge, which when hammered enough, splits a marriage.



Baby is an extension of love. Baby should never be given the opportunity to divert love. It is so distressing to see parents live their lives through their children and then to see their love for each other become cold. When this happens the growing up and leaving home of family can leave parents in a vacuum. Instead of drawing closer together they grow apart, seek love elsewhere if this has not already happened, and go their separate ways. Love cannot stand still; it cannot be put on hold. It grows and matures. Parents leave behind the richest of legacies for their children when they live out the togetherness of a life of love. When the going gets tough (and all families go through good and bad times) love has the opportunity to give hope, encouragement, forgiveness and acceptance. There is no substitute for a marriage founded on love and filled with the expression of love.

Merle Sparkes