

Motherhood Myths

Please answer true or false for each item.

1. ____ Mothers always know why their babies cry.
2. ____ Mothers sometimes feel frustrated with their infants.
3. ____ Mothers always need to handle all baby care themselves.
4. ____ Babies can do much more than eat, sleep, and cry the first three months of life.
5. ____ Mothers should be with their infants 24 hours a day the first three months.
6. ____ Mothers have to be perfect or their children will grow up to hate them.
7. ____ Mothers get three coffee breaks a day.
8. ____ Even at birth, babies can be very different – they each have a personality of their own.
9. ____ All mothers automatically “love” their babies the first time they see them.
10. ____ Mothers never feel sorry for themselves.
11. ____ Babies can cry for many reasons, not just when they are hungry or wet.
12. ____ All babies have the ability to recognize their mother’s face immediately.
13. ____ All babies cooperate with their mothers, if the mother is doing everything right.
14. ____ Mothers sometimes wonder if having a baby was a good idea.
15. ____ Many mothers fantasize about what it used to be like without children.
16. ____ No matter how much a mother loves her baby, it can still feel like caring for them is hard work.
17. ____ Feeling depressed after having a new baby can be part of the normal adjustment to motherhood.
18. ____ If a mother and baby are separated the first few hours after the baby’s delivery, the bond between that mother and child will be broken forever.

Motherhood Myths Answer Sheet

1. F Mothers always know why their babies cry.

False. Crying occurs for a variety of reasons, including hunger, discomfort, colic, sleepiness, fear, a need to be physically close to mom, etc. While many times a mother can easily figure out what the crying means and how to soothe her crying infant, there are times when no one can figure out what is behind the tears of an infant.

2. T Mothers sometimes feel frustrated with their infants.

True. All mothers get irritated or frustrated with their child's behavior at times, even the behavior of an infant. They also become overwhelmed and frustrated with being a mother sometimes. Mothers need to learn healthy ways to deal with these feelings so they can express these tough feelings without taking them out on the child. Mothers who take good care of themselves and learn to decrease the stress generally seem to be more successful at dealing with tough feelings. These mothers also become good role models for their babies and children on how to deal with tough feelings.

3. F Mothers always need to handle all baby care themselves.

False. In many countries, care for a new baby is shared with certain family members. It is taken for granted that a new mother needs help adjusting to her new role. Besides the adjustment, mothers sometimes need a little mothering themselves. It is important to plan on needing, and to ASK for, help from others.

4. T Babies can do much more than eat, sleep, and cry the first three months of life.

True. Babies are very active in the first three months of life. They begin to listen for and track familiar voices, they figure out who their mom is and who their dad is, they track objects, they begin to smile, and they develop patterns of behavior and interaction with others.

5. F Mothers should be with their infants 24 hours a day the first three months.

False. Being with anyone 24 hours a day for a long period of time can be a trying experience. Mothers need a break, too! It is perfectly okay to leave your baby with a trusted adult while you take a walk or go to the store.

6. F Mothers have to be perfect or their children will grow up to hate them.

False. No mother could ever be perfect and many, many children grow up to admire and love their parents despite the faults they may have. All mothers make mistakes. The most important thing is to recognize your mistakes, correct the problem, and learn what not to do as well as what might work better in the future.

7. F Mothers get three coffee breaks a day.

False. While mothers should take frequent rest breaks while adjusting to a new infant, it often seems like there is never enough time. It is important to fit in little naps and quiet times whenever possible, like when baby is sleeping. Housework can always wait!

8. T Even at birth, babies can be very different – they each have a personality of their own.

True. Each child is born with a unique set of qualities and personality features. No two are the same, even within the same family.

9. F All mothers automatically “love” their babies the first time they see them.

False. Any relationship is a process and each mother and baby is different. Some mothers report falling in love with their babies during pregnancy, some at birth, and others say it took several weeks or months. All of these experiences are normal.

10. F Mothers never feel sorry for themselves.

False. All mothers feel sorry for themselves at times, no matter how much they wanted to be a mother or how much they love their babies. Mothering is a hard job. It is important to talk about those feelings with someone you trust.

If you feel these feelings are interfering with the way you take care of yourself and your baby, talk to someone who can provide you the proper help, such as your health care professional.

11. T Babies can cry for many reasons, not just when they are hungry or wet.

True. Babies cry for a number of reasons, such as just needing to be near you, becoming frightened, hunger, discomfort, when waking up, when in pain, when their diapers are wet, when they are tired, or for many other reasons. As you and your child get to know each other, you will be able to figure out that cries can sound different and mean different things.

12. F All babies have the ability to recognize their mother's face immediately.

False. Babies begin to recognize their mothers at birth as their different senses develop and mature. Babies can often know their mother's smells, especially the smell of her breast milk, shortly after birth. They may also be able to know her voice shortly after birth. As their vision becomes clearer, they soon learn their mother's face on sight. So, many babies can recognize their mothers shortly after birth through their senses of smell or hearing, but until their vision matures they cannot usually know their mother's faces.

13. F All babies cooperate with their mothers, if the mother is doing everything right.

False. First, no mother can always do everything right, no matter how hard she tries. Second, no child ever cooperates all the time no matter how old they are. Mothers and babies are always learning from each other. They have good days and difficult days. All mothers experience bumps in the road when dealing with their babies.

14. T Mothers sometimes wonder if having a baby was a good idea.

True. Many mothers report questioning their decisions and their new job as a mother. Thinking about the changes you have gone through in going from woman without child to woman with child is normal and natural. If these feelings become overwhelming or if they begin to interfere with taking care of yourself or your baby, talk to someone about them.

15. T Many mothers fantasize about what it used to be like without children.

True. Any change involves fantasizing about what things used to be like before the change. Fantasies are a good way to work out feelings and thoughts in a safe way. Many mothers fantasize about the days when they did not have children.

16. T No matter how much a mother loves her baby, it can still feel like caring for them is hard work.

True. Mothering is hard work no matter how much you love your child. It is not only okay to acknowledge this hard work but it is important to give yourself credit for doing the hard work.

17. T Feeling depressed after having a new baby can be part of the normal adjustment to motherhood.

True. Depression after having a baby is very common. Many, many mothers feel depressed, sad, hopeless, or "blue". While it may be normal, it is still important to talk to someone about these feelings. While some depression right after childbirth is okay, depression that lasts more than a couple of weeks is often more serious. It is called post partum depression and can be helped through therapy, group participation or, sometimes, medication. No one has to suffer alone with feelings of depression.

18. F If a mother and baby are separated the first few hours after the baby's delivery, the bond between that mother and child will be broken forever.

False. While having mother and baby together the first few hours after birth can be a wonderful experience for both the mother and the baby, it does not guarantee a strong and secure bond between that mother and baby. Mothers and babies may need specific medical treatments right after delivery, mothers may have had to have sleep medication during the pregnancy and may not be awake right after delivery, and some mothers, such as adoptive mothers, do not have that experience of being with their baby right after birth. Still, many of these mothers develop strong, secure, positive bonds with their babies. Bonding between mother and child is a process. This relationship will grow and strengthen over time, there are no magic moments.