

## *Congratulations* ON YOUR NEW BABY!

The reality of parenthood hits home now that you are home with your new baby. Parents seldom feel prepared, whether it's their first or third. However, being parents of a newborn has its advantages. One of those advantages is that it is easy to promise that you are going to be the best Mom or Dad ever. To help you keep that promise, welcome to KinderKronicle. KinderKronicle is a parents journal of ideas and concepts for you to use in planning for a happy family. Now is the ideal time to give thought to parenthood and your role in parent leadership.

Studies show that the first five years of parenthood are the most important because it is during this time frame that most parents develop their parenting style and discipline strategies. Stable, unified home environments produce happier, healthier, better adjusted children.

### MOM AND DAD UNITY

A classic Aesop's fable tells of a father with several sons who were always fighting and quarreling. One day, the father had his sons bring him a small bundle of sticks bound together by cords. He asked each of his sons to take the bundle of sticks and try to break it. None of the sons could even bend the bundle, much less break it. When all had tried, the father cut the cords and handed each son a stick from the bundle. He asked them to break the sticks. They all easily snapped their sticks. "Like the sticks," he taught them, "the sons were much stronger, and could remain strong even under pressure, when they worked together."

Parenthood is like this fable. The first element of parent leadership is **unity** between Mom and Dad. The **3 Parent Things** booklet came with this Month 1 issue of KinderKronicle. In it you will find this statement: "the Dad-Mom relationship is very important...and has a HUGE impact on your child."




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#### Parent Leadership


*"Coming together is a beginning.  
Keeping together is progress.  
Working together is success."*

Henry Ford

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A contentious, spiteful, or manipulative Dad-Mom relationship victimizes the child by the very people who should nurture him or her.” A healthy loving relationship between Mom and Dad is like the bound bundle of sticks. You strengthen your parenthood with another “stick” when you are united in your love and care for your new baby. 

## COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL TO UNITY

What builds Dad-Mom unity? A major element is **communication**. As leaders of your family, you need to discuss and agree on how to handle the duties and challenges that arise from taking care of your little one. Unfortunately, studies show that a majority of parents spend little or no time at all discussing their respective parenting perspectives and family ideals before the baby is born. They don’t spend much time discussing how to co-parent or resolve differences between them on issues regarding the baby, either. These discussions are vital because children, even the very young, can sense when their parents disagree. As children get older, changing rules and boundaries are very confusing. 

## PARENTING STYLES OR DISCIPLINES

**Your approach to Parent Leadership makes a BIG difference!**

Parents have the responsibility of providing for the general welfare of their children. Basic general welfare includes food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. Providing for the general welfare of children requires parent leadership. In its simplest terms, being a leader of a family has four basic elements:


- **Goal:** A leader selects his or her goal or goals.
- **Plan:** Next, a leader develops a plan to accomplish the goal or goals selected.
- **Work the Plan:** Then, a leader takes the action required to carry out the Plan.
- **Review:** Periodically, a leader must review and evaluate whether his or her Plan is accomplishing the goal or goals selected and make adjustments if necessary.



As you begin to select your parenting goals, ask yourself this question: “What parenting style or discipline do I want to adopt in raising my child or children?” To that question, most young parents respond: “I don’t even know what you are talking about!”

When we talk about parenting styles or disciplines, we mean these four basic parenting disciplines described by social scientists:

- **Uninvolved:** these parents don’t really interact with their children. They might not ignore them completely, but the children don’t have firm boundaries or a lot of affection.
- **Authoritarian:** these parents are described as being “short on nurturing and long on discipline.”
- **Permissive:** these parents are “short on discipline and long on expressing love.”
- **Authoritative:** these parents give their children a lot of love combined with “well defined and enforced rules and limits.”

Studies show that children reared by **Authoritative** parents grow up to be the healthiest, happiest, and most successful. These children have a stronger self-image, get along better with other children, are more likely to stay out of trouble, and do better in school. KinderKronicle revisits the subject of parenting disciplines in many of its future issues. 



# Baby Chatter

## PATIENCE IS LOVE

*In keeping with the DVD A Chat with Your Baby, keep in mind the perspective of your baby.*


## SINGLE PARENT CORNER

### Don't "Go it Alone"

Many single parents still need to work with the baby's other parent in situations where both share custody or visitation. Even in amicable splits, differences in parenting disciplines, ideals, and perspectives can cause tension or difficulties as both parents seek to help the baby grow and learn. Ideally, both parents sit down together to discuss questions such as parent leadership styles and discipline, to create a mutually acceptable plan for a happy family. For example, can you agree on a plan like the **3 Parent Things** Parenting Plan?

Find out up front whether you have similar outlooks on parenting, or whether you differ wildly. For issues that don't affect the baby's health or safety, you may have to just teach your child from an early age that some rules are different depending on whose house you are in. However, if you can't agree on issues that are important to you, seek help. There are professionals who can mediate parent discussions while your children are young to help smooth out difficulties both now and down the road. Remember, the child's well being is paramount. The subject of co-parenting is fraught with a minefield of emotional issues. For the well being of the child, parents should reach an agreement on a parenting plan and discipline before the child reaches age six.

To be a single parent on your own, with little or no contact with your child's other parent, may actually be a blessing in disguise. Yes, it may seem like an insurmountable burden, but parenting alone is much preferred to two estranged parents pulling the child in different directions. In those situations, the child usually pays a heavy emotional price.

Whatever your relationship with your baby's other parent may be like, as a single parent you need a family support system. Having people who will support and assist you in your parenting goals is invaluable. Hopefully, you have close family members and friends who can fill this role. In addition, faith and work communities are places that single parents can look to for support. When you're feeling overwhelmed, having someone to talk to and share your concerns with can be very helpful. A support system can also help you reinforce the lessons you teach your child or children. 

*During this first month of my life, I don't have much control over my body. I eat, sleep, fill my diaper, look around, and cry a lot. I'm spending every minute working on growing bigger and understanding this confusing world I just entered.*

*I recognize Mom right away – after all, we've been very close for the last nine months. But it doesn't take me long to recognize Dad, either.*

I may not have much neck control yet, but I'll try to turn my head toward you when you hold me and talk to me. I love looking at you and hearing you as you talk softly to me. If you spend time talking to me and cuddling with me, I may respond by kicking my legs and arms. If I keep turning my head away, though, I may be overstimulated and need a break. All this fun is exhausting! I recognize soft, happy voices as a good thing, and I already know that raised voices and angry faces mean something is wrong.

*Most of my needs are physical when I'm so little, but I still need your love, right from my first moments of life. One of the best ways to show me love when I'm so little and demanding is to be patient with me. Did you know that I don't really have control over when I start and stop crying yet? In fact, I only cry when I need something—it's my way of communicating with you. I will stop when I have what I need or when I'm too tired to continue. So, if you respond quickly, I'll calm down much sooner!*



## MAKE ROOM FOR ME

*"Making the decision to have a child—it's momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body."*

Elizabeth Stone

Babies are a life changer. When your baby is born, immediately you need to relate to your spouse as both your partner and as your co-parent. You also begin to learn how you yourself parent in practice, as well as in theory. And, you have to make room for this new member of your household: your baby. He or she comes with his or her own personality, demands, and leaky plumbing. Even more intimidating, you're learning to adjust to all these things while being sleep deprived.

It's important to remember that it's okay to "let go of the familiar in order to make room for something unknown"<sup>1</sup> as you learn how to relate to your baby—and to yourself and your spouse in a new way. One day, your baby may like to cuddle to sleep, and the next day your baby may need to be left alone before he or she can settle down. Don't be afraid to try different strategies to accomplish your goals.

Dad, it's important during these first few weeks to rock and cuddle your new babe. If you can't sing, hum a soft lullaby. Baby likes to hear your deep voice, softly spoken. Hold your babe close so he or she can hear your heartbeat.

Don't worry if your relationship with your spouse is a bit different at first as you begin to really make room for your child in your lives. During these first few weeks your baby is saying, "Dad, the most important thing in Mom's life right now is me. Sorry you have to play second fiddle for a while. But that's just the way it is." Pay attention to your baby's mother. The hormonal changes that come with pregnancy and infancy are significant, especially when a woman is also recovering physically and operating on little sleep. If your spouse is suffering from the "baby blues" for more than a week or so, she may be experiencing post-partum depression and may need professional support.

Together, Dad and Mom, enjoy the wonder, power, and fulfillment of bringing a new life into the world. Remember, KinderKronicle will be with you once a month with parenting ideas and discussions. 

1. Davis, Laura, and Janis Keyser. *Becoming The Parent You Want To Be*. New York; Broadway Books, 1997.



### NEXT ISSUE- MONTH 2 LOOK FOR THESE EXCITING FEATURES AND ARTICLES

- PARENT LEADERSHIP  
Where Are You Going?
- FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
- SINGLE PARENT CORNER  
Coping
- BABY CHATTER

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## Happy Family

by Andrew N. Harris

