



How to make the most of the first couple of weeks as dad

As-is ...

No right or wrong.

Just a summary of the responses I gathered, and an example of how I am thinking about my own plan

June 23, 2013

Background ...

I am about to be dad. The due date was June 22, 2013. Colton can show up at anytime! DV.

I decided to take a conscious approach to being a dad. To help me I am re-purposing the Vimbli onboarding solution. I am not sure it will work, but it will definitely be an interesting experiment. I included a snapshot of one of the first iterations of my Vimbli “dad”-plan.

The survey was an effort to get a bit more information to use as input for my plan. I hoped for 20 or so responses. I received more than 60. Mostly from dads.

What follow is a summary of the responses. There are not many surprises. The written responses are very interesting, and I regret not asking identifiable information.

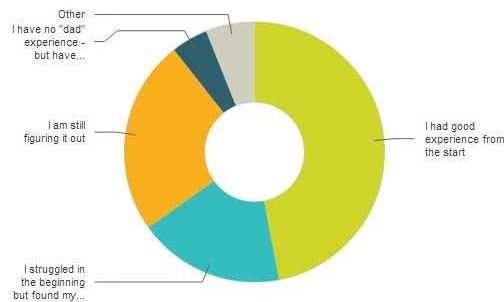
In the end the feedback is consistent: The change is personal. You need to figure it out yourself. Most agree on the following: Create time for the mom, and be a true partner. How you do it is up to you.



Hennie Strydom
Dad-to-be
Founder, Vimbli Inc.

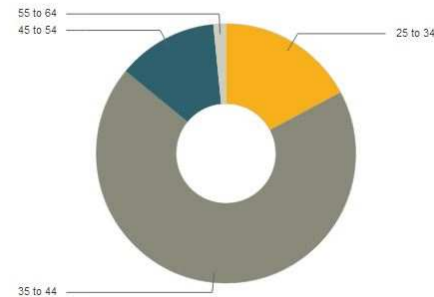
How did you experience the transition from manhood to dadhood?

Answered: 66 Skipped: 17



Which range fits your age best?

Answered: 64 Skipped: 19



1. What do you think the mom valued most?

My summary

1. **TIME:** Anything that gives her time to sleep or do something for herself
2. **A PARTNER:** Being a true partner, not just being around. Anticipating and addressing needs. Doing a “legit” share of the work.

A Wordle and a few of the responses (more on page)



Being available and patient. Mobilizing others to help out starting 2-4 weeks after birth. Everyone helps immediately after.

Don't expect anything from her she is also coping as is. Get her help with the house and with things like groceries. DO NOT allow to many visitors in the early days

Listening, knowing when to step in and giving her a time out

My wife valued that I was an active participant right from the get go and looked to share the responsibility of raising the child - even when it came down to changing diapers, doing laundry and getting the diaper bag ready when we went out.

Reliefs during the night and knowing that certain tasks are the dad's job, e.g., changing diapers, nail filing, dressing him up, or bathing or however you guys want to split tasks

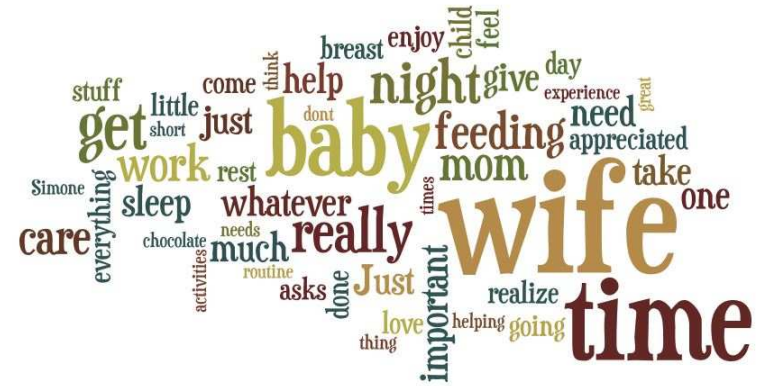
That I legit did my half of the work and hours. That we were true partners.



2. What were the most important tasks you took on during the transition?



A Wordle and a short selection of the written responses. More on page



Be there for playtime. Respect the "schedule"; help get a pattern established/reinforced.

Kids demand a LOT of attention and really need it. Your wife needs it too!

Do half of the hard stuff. Period.

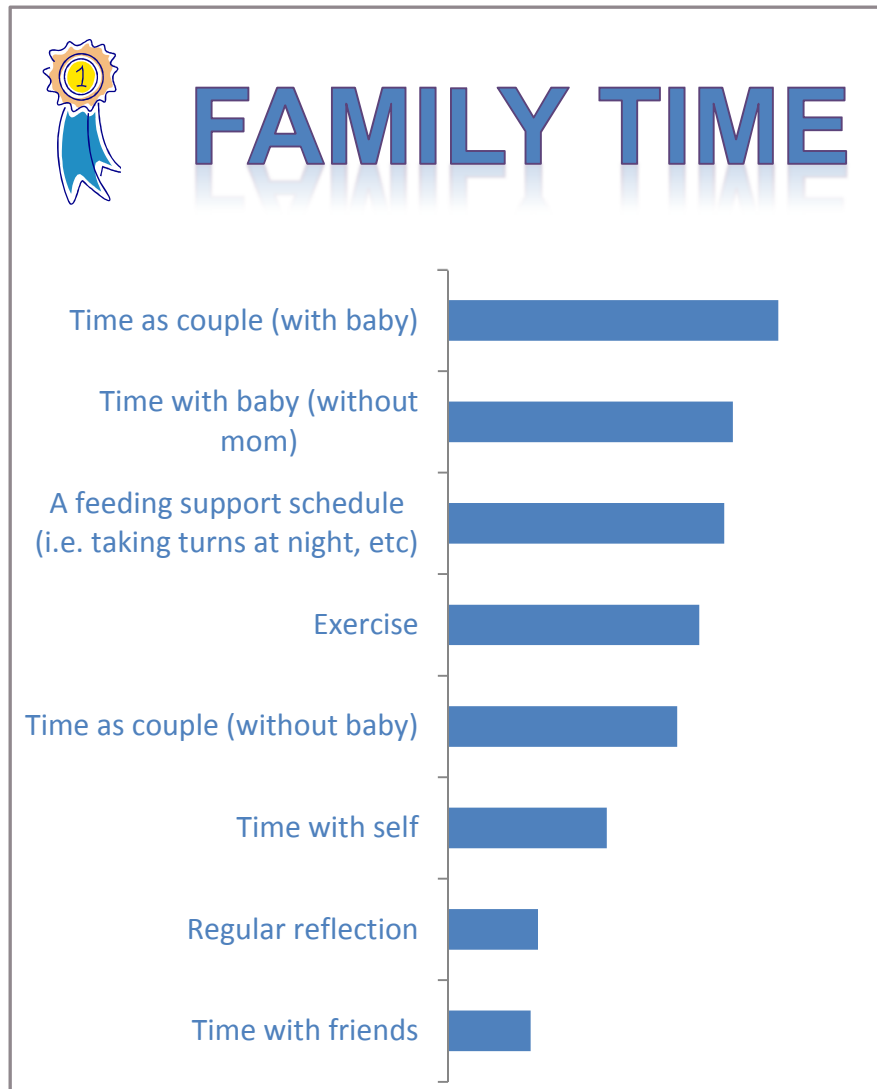
Do whatever the mum asks in the moment. Even stand on your head!

*Don't volunteer yourself to do what she 'asks' you to do.
Do it before she asks.*

Don't demand anything from her she has to take care of the baby. She doesnt need you to be a baby too.



3. Which elements were most important to you to help you keep going during the transition?



A Wordle and a short selection of the written responses. More on page



Accepting the fact that this is truly FOR LIFE! Nothing that you have done will have as big an impact on your life. Your kids remains your kids for the rest of your life...

It was all a blur. Got home with baby and thought: "Now what!? Help!".

No "markers." it's a journey, not a destination.

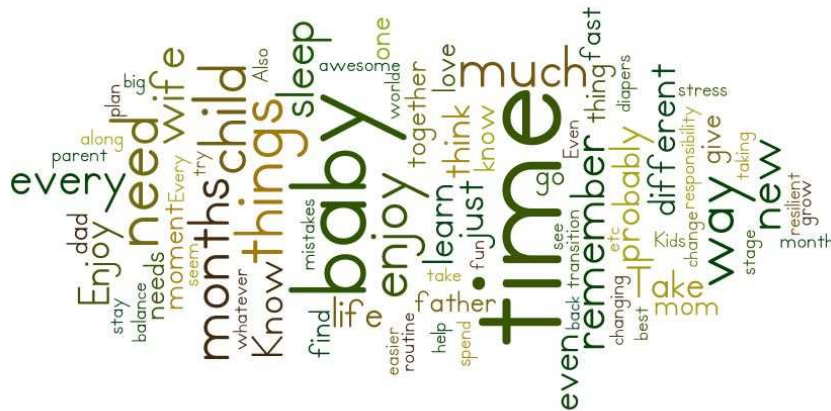
One job at a time. Keep yourself from thinking about the child in the aggregate - you'll go crazy. Do what's in front of you and worry about the other stuff later. Learned that as a result of hard rugby training sessions.

You get isolated quick, be sure to reach out to friends, etc., esp. those who have had kids recently. They'll get it and still be sympathetic to what you're going through

You have to take "self" out and navigate your decisions and efforts based on what is best for baby and mother.



4. Closing thoughts? ... see pages x and y for more details



I look at Sacagawea (the Shoshone Indian who took her infant on the Lewis & Clark Expedition). You don't need much...

Don't let the new baby dictate your life - it should be the other way around. Plan for the new activities, but don't allow it to change things in a big way. Take things in your stride and don't be overly protective or change your routine drastically during the first few weeks.

Realizing at month 3, that feeding the baby and changing the diapers will come to pass helped tremendously in getting through the monotony of the baby's routine.

...enjoy the ride, and always remember that the child isn't really yours...but rather us simply "on loan" from the Father above!

Kids spell love like this: TIME

Enjoy every minute...(even when your without sleep and tired) They will grow up way too slow and way too fast!

Don't forget to have fun! This is a joyful time - though with the tight schedules and lack of sleep it may not seem so. They grow up fast, so take time to remember and enjoy them. Every month they will be different.

... don't over-think things too much. Kids aren't bridges, they're much more complicated ;-)

Being a father is the most wonderful thing in the world Just remember to enjoy it. Even the chaos. Sleepless nights won't be forever. It's awesome.

1st time parenting is a challenge but the 1st of everything is worth a million ! BE THERE FOR IT!

Be at peace with not knowing what your doing. Take time to thank God. Know that in one year it will be different.

Be sure to find time to focus on you as a couple. The kid(s) will move out but you will be together so you need to continuously invest in your relationship as a couple.

Enjoy the moment. It is fleeting. And don't panic! Babies are far more resilient than we give them credit for.

Being a father is the best job I have ever had.

Keep in mind, it will take you some time to bond as Mom have a 9 months "head start" on the bonding. Take your time, but DO make time for those moments, it will pay back later.



8/25	Don
8/25	Don
8/27/01	Don
8/28/01	Don
8/25/0	Don
8/12/01	Don
8/25/01	Don
8/27	Don
8/27/200	Don
8/27	Don

A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find that after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. - *John Steinbeck*

We climb to heaven most often on the ruins of our cherished plans, finding our failures were successes. - *Amos Bronson Alcott*

Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes... but no plans. - Peter Drucker

He, who every morning plans the transactions of the day, and follows that plan, carries a thread that will guide him through a labyrinth of the most busy life. - Victor Hugo

Some people are very lucky, and have the story in their heads. I've never storyboarded anything. I like the idea of chance. What makes God laugh is people who make plans. - Nicolas Roeg



Why a plan?



Having a plan is a personal choice.

I don't think having a "dad" plan is necessary, but for me having a plan works. I use plans in the rest of my life, and I will benefit from a plan as a dad as well.

What do I typically get from my plans?

- Increased awareness of my actions
- A better chance to appreciate every the event as it unfolds. A plan allows me to respond faster when things change, and to forward with more confidence when it works!
- A tool to support ongoing communication and adjustments
- Better insight on "me" ... supporting my own learning and growth
- Increased enjoyment and satisfaction

I am comfortable changing the plan many times ... in the end I want to be there for my wife and son. A plan is just a tool to help me, it is not the goal. My plan will be very different from yours, and having no plan is also a plan.

Turn page to see a Vimbli example



How a dad-plan could look in Vimbli ...

Illustrative

Create basic 4 week plan to start with ...

... and will use the dashboard to support conscious decisions / adjustments

MISSION DETAIL EDIT MISSION

Title: Dad - first month

Start: Jun-10-2013 00:00:00

End: Jul-21-2013 23:59:59

Description: Making the most of the first month as dad.

Definition of success: Success will be a stronger partnership with Simone. Having a good rhythm in place to care for Colton, and deal with general tasks. Having date night every week (by the end of the first month).

Sponsor: An Vimbli

CONNECTION FREQUENCY

Name	Frequency
	Weekly (1)
	Mission (1)
	Mission (2)

CONNECTION NOTES

Not available

KEY TO SUCCESS

Description	Expected hours	Period	Start	End	Keywords
Exercise	4	Weekly	2013-06-10	2013-07-21	Run, gym
Prioritization/ Reflection	2	Weekly	2013-06-10	2013-07-21	Reflect, prioritize, reflect, focus
Vimbli	20	Weekly	2013-06-10	2013-07-21	Vimbli, SD, intro
SMS	6	Weekly	2013-06-10	2013-07-21	Simone, hmsms, sms

MISSION NOTES

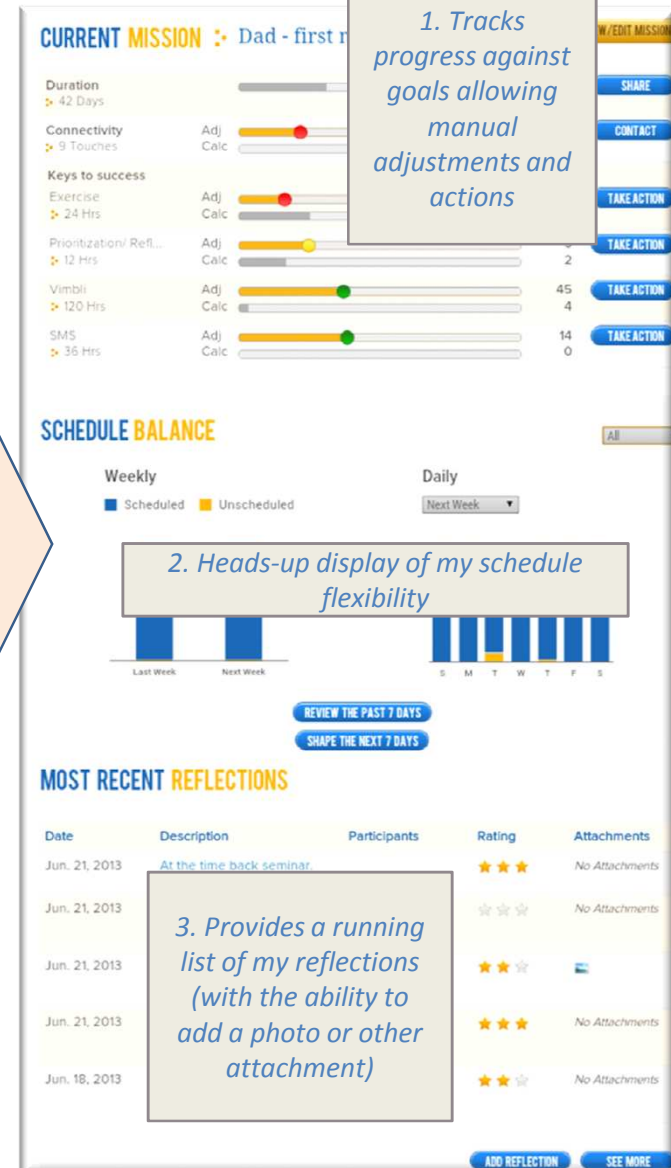
Stake in the ground. I plan on updating, refining this plan every week based on input from Simone

EDIT

Integration with Google automates tracking, and allows for reflection from a baseline.

Regular prompts and the ability to sign-up a sponsor increase follow-through.

1. Tracks progress against goals allowing manual adjustments and actions



2. Heads-up display of my schedule flexibility

3. Provides a running list of my reflections (with the ability to add a photo or other attachment)



If you want to read written responses ... (As-is, except for removal of identifiable information)

1. What do you think the mom valued most?
2. What was the most important tasks you took on during the transition?
3. Which elements were most important to you to help you keep going during the transition?
4. Closing thoughts?



1. What do you think the mom valued most? 1/2

Alone time and help with chores

Anything to keep her spirits up and keep her focused on how awesome the little one is.

Assistance and giving them some rest

Being able to SLEEP

Being around especially during the first 1 - 2 weeks after the birth for support.

Being available and patient. Mobilizing others to help out starting 2-4 weeks after birth. Everyone helps immediately after.

Being involved. Seriously, I think every woman's deep dark fear is that the man they married isn't going to be an involved dad.

Being ready to help and be there, comforting her knowing that she is not alone in anything... because hormones will make her nuts

Being there with her for the late night feedings.

Caring for her and keep loving her. Advice: usually morning time is one of the best for babies... so make sure, at least the first six months, you spend time with the baby quality hours in the morning.

Don't expect anything from her she is also coping as is. Get her help with the house and with things like groceries. Don't allow too many visitors in the early days. I think the most important things (and more so than giving chocolates or flowers) is really helping with chores and cleaning. Getting up early and making sure the kitchen is spotless was/is worth more to my wife than any box of chocolate.

Involvement, giving her some time on her own (even if it is just to take a relaxing bath), listening, trying.

Extra help. Letting her sleep that extra hour at night.

Full partnership.

Getting a few minutes of quiet time for her sanity...

getting the crying baby at night and bringing to mom. Sleep deprivation is huge for parents...

Giving her a break, regardless of what I was doing with baby then.

Giving mom a break to sleep in

Having somebody share the experience and feeling valued for what she is going through in giving birth and feeding the little angel

Having somebody step in to help.

Help between 5 and 7 every night..../Helping her get naps and taking nighttime duties/ Helping out for the middle of the night wakeup calls / Helping with chores, cooking and baby stuff

Her car keys.

Just being a partner in raising our children. Helping where I can and especially jumping in when she experiences a tough day

Just being available!/there.

Knowing that we were in it together, that it wasn't just her.

Late night feeds.

Listening, knowing when to step in and giving her a time out.



1. What do you think the mom valued most? 2/2

Lots of little things. Being able to "hand over" the child even for just a little while.

Me being around a lot

Moral support. She will feel a lot of pressure to be a "good mom" and may go in thinking that some hard things (breastfeeding, managing sleep) are supposed to come easily and naturally. Help her out and let her know she's doing a good job.

My wife valued that I was an active participant right from the get go and looked to share the responsibility of raising the child - even when it came down to changing diapers, doing laundry and getting the diaper bag ready when we went out.

Obedience.

Reliefs during the night and knowing that certain tasks are the dad's job, e.g., changing diapers, nail filing, dressing him up, or bathing or however you guys want to split tasks

Support and time to get away a bit, even if just small like a Saturday morning surprise pedicure.

Shared suffering!

Showing that you love the baby and care about its day to day activities

Some free time from our baby. A little quiet time means a great deal.

Some time off to take a long relaxing bath or maybe going for a nice jog in the case of Simone

Someone to do stuff! Mum is tired all the time and still mentally in shock. Suddenly she is completely focused on the new arrival, constantly wondering: Am I doing this right? When do I feed him/her? When do I burp? Should the baby sleep so much, is the baby too hot/cold, what do I do now, what do I do next?! Etc. So if you can cook, clean, change diapers, make sure mom is comfortable, etc. that will be much appreciated.

Support. Keeping even-tempered when you are both tired and liable to be cranky. Occasionally letting her sleep through the night (if she has expressed milk) and getting up to change the baby sometimes. Makes no sense to both wake up with the baby each time, but also no sense for her to only wake up all the time, even if you can't breast feed. Delicate balance.

Taking care of meals, cleaning up, and any way to help her sleep more!!

Taking on household duties - cleaning / dinner / groceries etc.

That I legit did my half of the work and hours. That we were true partners.

The fact that both can do all for baby (except breast feeding) and you don't distinguish between that is a woman's job and not a male's job.

Time off from 7x24 child rearing (in the beginning).

Time spent together, reassurance

Time with child, to give her free time. Taking care of meals and I often was the overnight person if the child was fussy beyond needing mother's milk.

Time, attention and expressing that you are glad to do it and do not expect a parade for not being a Mad Men throwback (btw- don't think I got an A in this, more like a gentleman's "C")

Time.

Whatever mattered for her in the moment. On balance probably practical stuff, with special treats every so often being handy.

Involvement. Wanting to do the not so great things like diaper changing, bathing, house work, cooking. The bonus was the alone time. I used to take our daughter for a walk every morning around 6 AM. Mom thought I was allowing her to rest. The truth... I got to have alone time with my little girl. Priceless memories at the doughnut store.



2. What was the most important tasks you took on during the transition?

Be there for playtime. Respect the "schedule"; help get a pattern established/reinforced.

Be there for your wife... do whatever you can to remove anything "stressful" so that she can rest when the baby is sleeping.

Being involved and available

Being present, engaged & patient.

Kids demand a LOT of attention and really need it. Your wife needs it too!

Diaper changing easy. Important to hold your baby, calm them when crying. Give your wife time to herself a few times a week (eg to go to yoga, gym etc.)

Do half of the hard stuff. Period.

Do whatever the mum asks in the moment. Even stand on your head!

Don't volunteer yourself to do what she 'asks' you to do. Do it before she asks.

Giving moral support was also important.

Don't demand anything from her she has to take care of the baby. She doesn't need you to be a baby too.

Just realize that there will come a point when you think you are really working hard and really putting in effort that most men would not commit to. In essence - you feel you are over-indexing involvement, effort and care. Just realize that at this very point, your wife will get on you for not doing more. In truth - there is always more to do, less time to rest, help to give. So step up.

Realize that the hormones pulsing through your wife's body are unexplainable and scary. In the first three months - just be prepared to take it.

Offer help where you can. Your wife will need it. I would say changing diapers, helping with night time activities and making dinner (or ordering dinner) rank up high. But try to spend as time as you can around the house. Your presence will be noticed and appreciated.

"The days are long, but the years are short." Put everything aside and do as much with the child as you can - they will be grown before you know it and you will not see them again until the circus arrives.

Take a full 24 hour shift without Mom - otherwise you will never come close to understanding what you ask of those that care for your child on a daily basis

The most important thing is to work out a routine with fixed roles for dad, such as doing the bath and sleep routine or doing certain feedings if mom is not breastfeeding. This gives mom some important time off and helps Dad to feel more part of the whole experience.

Think now about what things you'll want to say in the future that you've done every day/week/year of your child's life...

Time is the limiting factor. "gifts" of appreciation to your wife are nice, but gifts of time will be more appreciated (IMHO). Read "The Five Love Languages" and "The Five Love Languages of Children". Or if you just want to pick one, get the "FLLo Children".

Whatever shows your wife that you give a rip and : a) do not expect her to shoulder all the work b) that you love her c) that you appreciate all she is doing for your child d) don't think that you can do all the "fun stuff" of being a parent and leave her with the poop stuff (literally).



3. How did you navigate the transition? Did you have "markers" to help you?

Read "What to expect during the first year". Only read it one month in advance of each new month.

Accepting the fact that this is truly FOR LIFE! Nothing that you have done will have as big an impact on your life. Your kids remain your kids for the rest of your life...

Baby is actually remarkably quiet and easy to have around (vs toddler) so not much need for together time without baby. It is nice to go out together bringing baby for change of scenery, and chance to reflect together. After a few weeks it is nice to go out with friends (you can blink and realize you haven't seen friends for months). "Me" time is critical - normally easier for the man who goes back to work - essential to create some of it for the mom.

Being open & honest with my wife regarding our observations/learnings/frustrations/laughable moments/etc.

Communicate with your wife and check in for feedback of how you are doing to better understand her expectations

Friends in the same situation.

Go out to eat the first few weeks - gets much harder after that!

I listened, watched, and cared in whatever way was most helpful for her.

It just happened...

It was all a blur. Got home with baby and thought: "Now what!? Help!". You learn very quickly that there is now very little "me" time. "Markers"? What, are you kiddin' me? :-) Way too scientific! You just go with the flow, do what comes naturally.

You have to take "self" out and navigate your decisions and efforts based on what is best for baby and mother.

Just stumbled through it (still stumbling through it) and trying to do the best I can.

No - you're usually too tired!

No "markers." It's a journey, not a destination.

None. I was winging it.

One job at a time. Keep yourself from thinking about the child in the aggregate - you'll go crazy. Do what's in front of you and worry about the other stuff later. Learned that as a result of hard rugby training sessions.

Putting Baby on a feed, wake, sleep schedule during the day helped plan 3 hours using baby wise book

Realize it will be hell. Get help if u need. Don't suffer alone. Night nurse, nanny, family, etc.

Realizing that helping my wife was necessary for both of us to successfully make the transition from a couple to a family. Markers were not as important.

My wife goes to the City Church mom's group which has been invaluable. School doesn't teach you how to be a parent, so you need friends to help. Family is sometimes helpful and sometimes gets in the way.

Sleep training is invaluable. See "Babywise" if you haven't already.

Things change all the time so don't look for stable, look for team work and give its other space. If wife is with baby and baby cries don't interfere let her figure it out. Wife needs break from night shift so agree on something ahead of time like disposable nappies, breastfeeding, etc. Also get a few good books to prepare like "content little baby" (I think), "What to expect" and decide as a couple. Don't listen to too many people they will confuse you. Take guidance and decide self ...

Once the baby is sleeping better at night, things become easier. Establish a regular night time routine as early as possible. Even now, our routine has stayed the same: 1) Bath 2) Bottle 3) Read Books 4) Bed. Bedtime is rarely an issue in our house and it's largely because we have kept the same routine since day one. I credit my wife for her insights on this because being a grade 1 teacher, she always emphasized the importance of routine for kids (no matter how old they are). One final piece of advice is that ask family and friends to wait a few days before bombarding the house for a visit. That can create stress for your wife because she may still be getting comfortable with holding the baby, feeding the baby and it can create stress having to "learn" that in front of everyone else. Plus it means you need to have the house "presentable" - which can create stress when you're already sleep deprived :P

This question is tough. I didn't take time with self or time with friends, so I don't know if it was important or not. I think it would have helped, but I really don't know.

Time to grow up and stop being selfish. Those days of long runs, or "me time" - those are over for the short-term. It quickly becomes all about the baby (nap times, feeding times, cooking and cleaning). There is light at the end of the tunnel - but your questions cracked me up.

We just sort of winged it. Lots of communication and patience. Initially, expect the other person to be extremely tired and on the verge of a breakdown...that will help you be sensitive in your words and actions.

What is "time with self" again? or "regular reflection" for that matter?

You get isolated quick, be sure to reach out to friends, etc., esp. those who have had kids recently. They'll get it and still be sympathetic to what you're going through



4. Closing thoughts 1/2

... don't over-think things too much. Kids aren't bridges, they're much more complicated ;-)

Being a father is the most wonderful thing in the world. Enjoy each day, stage and moment. It really does go by quickly. Recognize that each child is different. Everyone has an opinion about how to do it and what worked for them. Obviously it is fine to listen to them, but most importantly you just love your child the most that you can and do what you think is best. Be there to help with whatever needs help (ask your wife if you're not sure what). Just remember to enjoy it. Even the chaos. Sleepless nights won't be forever. It's awesome.

1st time parenting is a challenge but the 1st of everything is worth a million ! BE THERE FOR IT!

Feed-play-sleep and overall schedule made a big difference for us.

Remember what you were like as an overworked consultant lacking sleep - whatever flaws came out then will manifest as a dad so have a plan to address those...

Be at peace with not knowing what your doing. Take time to thank God. Know that in one year it will be different.

Know yourself. If you think you need exercise or time with friends to stay "steady," then you probably do. Know your wife. Know what she 'needs,' even if she hasn't articulated this to you (and she probably hasn't, and even if she has, it's probably only 'partial'). Read "the 5 love languages" either the original, or the one on children. Get to know your child. Personality will start to be shown when they get to toddler stage, but you'll see hints early on.

In the words of a wise friend, "If you have it all together after having a new baby, something is wrong and you probably aren't helping enough."

Regular reflection' , and 'Time with self' seem nice in theory!

The most difficult thing is that there will be zero downtime for you as you will be a husband, father, founder trying to build a company, friend, etc. Even when you are tired, sick, etc, your child will need you and you need to find ways to be there no matter what. Every parent (father's especially) will mess up repeatedly. As with your professional life, sometimes you learn more from your mistakes than your successes. Learn from mistakes but do not harp on them - kids are amazingly resilient (and they do not remember anything for the first few years of life!). Be sure to find time to focus on you as a couple. The kid(s) will move out but you will be together so you need to continuously invest in your relationship as a couple.

We were surprised by the degree to which having a baby strengthened our marriage immediately despite warnings to the contrary.

Enjoy the moment. It is fleeting. And don't panic! Babies are far more resilient than we give them credit for.

Being a father is the best job I have ever had.

Enjoy it - it will be great. Take LOTS of photo's.

Keep in mind, it will take you some time to bond as Mom have a 9 months "head start" on the bonding. Take your time, but DO make time for those moments, it will pay back later.

You gotta learn as you go. Don't stress, don't dwell on the arguments, stay positive and supportive, and enjoy every moment!

Don't forget to have fun! This is a joyful time - though with the tight schedules and lack of sleep it may not seem so. They grow up fast, so take time to remember and enjoy them. Every month they will be different.



4. Closing thoughts 2/2

I look at Sacagawea (the Shoshone Indian who took her infant on the Lewis & Clark Expedition). You don't need much...

Don't let the new baby dictate your life - it should be the other way around. Plan for the new activities, but don't allow it to change things in a big way. Take things in your stride and don't be overly protective or change your routine drastically during the first few weeks.

All "they" say is true: the growth of the baby goes fast, enjoy every minute, it's exhausting, sleep deprivation is the hardest issue, your baby is the most beautiful thing ever, and you wonder how you used to spend your time when you were not a parent! Good luck!

Balance. Or maybe even beyond balance initially. In other words spend extra time with child so mom has extra time. Especially if mom is home with baby while you are at work. For me I need little sleep so had no problem taking on night shifts with baby. BUT you also have to balance that with your own needs (exercise, go out with the guys) and need to have a wife that understands that. Which she will if you "put in your fair share or more". Lastly, it's your CHILD, not a CHORE, you should WANT to be involved in every aspect including changing diapers.

Realizing at month 3, that feeding the baby and changing the diapers will come to pass helped tremendously in getting through the monotony of the baby's routine.

...enjoy the ride, and always remember that the child isn't really yours...but rather as simply "on loan" from the Father above!

Reasonably easy transition. Important to still do things - just bring baby along.

There is no perfect plan so relax and give each other a break when things don't work out.

Life is all about relationships, and making time for mom and baby both individually and all together is critical.

Kids spell love like this: TIME

Make time for you and your partner alone...

You become a man once you see your wife give birth to your child, until then you think you know responsibility!

It's awesome, fun, tough, and crazy all at once

Transitioning depends very much on what kind of person you are and what kind of dad you want to be. If the two are already aligned, the transition will be much much easier. Also, from 6 months on TEACH YOUR BABY SIGN LANGUAGE. They won't sign back for 4-6 months, but it makes ages 12 months - 24 months monumentally easier.

You learn by doing (and there will be lots to do!)

Try to remember that this is not about you. You did not have a fetus taking up your womb, you do not have hormones that have seized control of your body and you have not gone from a warm suspended environment to the terrors of the world. You are the only one for whom the last 9 months have been physically pretty normal - so buck up.

Don't stress... you won't know a lot of things but you will learn along the way. Also, don't think you have to try and do things the way everyone else recommends... try to find your own strategies as well because every baby is different. Finally, just be there for your wife :)

Being a new dad can be a bit overwhelming in the beginning, but that is the beauty of the experience - it takes your sense of responsibility and meaning in life to a whole new level, so just enjoy it and don't over analyse. And my little boy next to me says - it is important to have a sense of humour!

Enjoy every minute...(even when your without sleep and tired)
They will grow up way too slow and way too fast!



Thanks for reading.
I am looking forward to hear from you.
If you have ideas or questions please send
me a note at hennie@vimbli.com

