

# Pathways: Be ready for anything

October 2015 Newsletter



Balancing fear and  
risk in life

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Are you spontaneous?



Is it possible to balance risk and fear? Avoiding all risk may feel good at the moment, but it could stand in the way of your personal development in the long run. **More...**

Is your spouse or partner expecting? If so, you're expecting too! Here are some tips that can help you and your special Mom-to-be while you're both waiting on baby to arrive. **More...**

Do you wish you had more energy? Guess what could be getting in the way? **More...**

How do you feel about being spontaneous? I'm trying harder to be "ready for anything" these days... **More...**

## Getting help

Confidential support, information and resource referrals are available for a variety of concerns — both work and personal. Call for assistance for you, your household members or your adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not. Call or visit us online today!

# Balancing fear and risk in life

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Is it possible to balance risk and fear? Here's psychologist Abraham Maslow's answer:

"Life is an ongoing process of choosing between safety (out of fear and need for defense) and risk (for the sake of progress and growth). Make the growth choice a dozen times a day."<sup>1</sup>

## Which is better: safety or risk?

Life is about learning and growing.<sup>2</sup> If you opt for safety all the time, you can't reach your full potential because progress requires risk.

Yet, there are many things to keep you in your safety zone these days. Threats of terrorism and violence, financial ups and downs, health risks and more are on our radar nearly every day. How do you know when to "go for it" and when not to?

## Reap rewards for taking risks

Did you know that just considering a risk pays off? Studies show your brain releases dopamine — a neurotransmitter related to pleasant events and rewards<sup>2</sup> — even if you're only thinking about an adventure.

This is called the "exploration bonus" — when the brain shouts "yes!" to something new that hasn't even happened yet, but is on your mind.<sup>3</sup> The more you overcome your fear of risk, the more risk you're able to handle going forward. Action trumps anxiety.

## Safe but sorry?

Avoiding risk doesn't pay off in the same way. You may feel less fear at the moment you decide against a risk. But what's the long range cost?

When you let fear control your decisions and life, you curb your growth. While it may bring temporary comfort, you may also wind up bored and disengaged from the world around you. Comfort zones may feel good, but they're obstacles on the path to personal development.<sup>4</sup>

## Ways to manage uncertainty

You can make progress by examining your worries. Of course, you don't want to push yourself to take unreasonable risks. But you also don't want anxiety to rule your life.

Here's a way to "name and tame" your fear. When facing something scary, picture it in great detail. Think about the possible outcomes from the worst to the best. How likely are the worst possible outcomes? How could you handle these outcomes if they did happen?

Finally, list all the reasons for giving it a try. How might you grow? How could you benefit? What other gains could come from it? As you work on separating reality from fantasy, you're likely to move toward choosing growth over fear.

<sup>1</sup>[www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com). Accessed August 2015.

<sup>2</sup>[www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com). Accessed August 2015.

<sup>3</sup>[www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com). Accessed August 2015.

<sup>4</sup>[www.about.com](http://www.about.com). Accessed August 2015.



# Getting ready to welcome your baby

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Today many couples say “we’re pregnant.” Yet the pregnant spouse or partner is often the focus of attention. She’s changing visibly. But her partner is expecting — and changing — too.

The parent who won’t be in labor still has a major role to play — before, during and after the birth of their child. That partner may not have stretch marks, but there will be lots of preparation, work and adjustment.

## Helping your pregnant spouse or partner

It’s a happy and stressful time for Mom-to-be. Hormonal changes may lead to morning sickness and fatigue. There can be emotional ups and downs too. Here are some ways you can help:

- **Encourage her to take good care of herself and you do the same.** She’ll be advised to stay away from alcohol and cigarettes. Consider joining her as a sign of support — and for your own health, too.
- **If her doctor advises exercise, try walking or working out together.**
- **Encourage her to get enough rest.**
- **Go with her to as many prenatal doctor visits as you can.**
- **Visit the hospital maternity area where the birth is planned and attend childbirth classes together.** These are great opportunities to bond.

## Taking care of yourself

Here are some things you can do for yourself during Mom’s pregnancy:

- **Read about babies and parenting.** You’ll get most of your training “on the job”. But it helps to have ideas about what to expect.

- **Notice others around you who seem like good parents.** What do they do — or not do — that makes them role models?
- **Mom’s health is being closely monitored.** What about yours? Get a check-up and tend to any health issues. You’ll soon have a baby who needs both parents!

## Adjusting to new roles

Expect adjustment time as you move into your new roles. Here are some pointers to keep in mind:

- **Talk openly about hopes and fears — it’s natural for future parents to have both.**
- **Update your family affairs.** Life insurance, wills and plans about who will care for your child if both parents are ever unable to do so should all be in place. Baby needs medical insurance, too.
- **Work together on a budget built for three.** Add in expenses (clothing, food, medical, “other”) that come along with kids.
- **Find out about family leave options.** Will one or both of you be able to take time off from work?
- **Try to arrange to have support in the first weeks after the birth.** Is family nearby? Will they cook a meal or babysit a bit? As new parents, you’ll need some hands-on help and sleep.
- **Discuss career plans.** Will you both work once baby is here? Will you need child care? Have you started to look into the options and their costs?

## Final tips

Keep your smartphone and camera handy — you’re about to have endless photo-ops. And remember: Parenting includes fun, hard work, challenges and rewards. Buckle up for the ride of your life!

# The power of your ZZZZs

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Do you wish you had more energy to take on each day? Guess what could be holding you back?

It's sleep. If you don't get enough of it, you can't be at your best. Studies show that lack of sleep has a role in many tragic accidents,<sup>1</sup> including 5,000-6,000 car crash deaths per year.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, there's the amazing story of Captain "Sully" Sullenberger — the airline pilot who saved 155 lives by making an emergency landing in 2009 on the Hudson River in New York City. He said his difficult landing might not have been possible had he not had enough sleep the night before.<sup>3</sup>

## The basics of sleep

The human body is built to be awake for about 16 hours a day. Then the body needs sleep so it can rest and repair itself. The average adult needs between 7-8 hours of sleep per night.<sup>4</sup>

## What happens if you don't get the sleep you need?<sup>4</sup>

- Studies have found a link between lack of sleep and health problems like heart disease, heart attacks, diabetes and obesity.
- Chronic pain can be intensified by lack of sleep.
- You tend to be more moody or cranky when you're sleepy.
- Your sex life may suffer if you're often tired.
- You may not think as clearly or act as logically.
- Your memory can be impaired.
- Lack of sleep can weaken your immune system and make you more prone to getting sick.

## Getting the shut-eye you need

There are many things that can interfere with sleep. Having young children and a hectic lifestyle are examples. Here are some steps you can take to improve your sleep:<sup>5</sup>

- 1. Try to keep your sleep/wake schedule as regular as possible.** Let your body get into a rhythm for when it's time to rev up or slow down.
- 2. Exercise regularly.** There are many reasons to exercise, but one is so you're tired at bedtime.
- 3. Avoid caffeine, alcohol and heavy meals** for several hours before you go to bed.
- 4. Create a relaxing bedtime routine.** If the nightly news agitates you, don't watch it. You can catch up on the news in the morning instead. If a hot bath or shower calms you, take one shortly before bed. If a good book helps you get into sleep-mode, read for a while. Find what works for you.
- 5. Make your sleep space quiet, dark and comfortable.** Some people find that sleeping in a cool room suits them. Others opt for a warmer temperature. Again, find what works best for you.

## Take steps toward better sleep

If you make gradual changes in your sleep hygiene, you'll be taking a big step toward having more energy and mental power to handle everyday challenges. Sleep tight!

<sup>1</sup>[www.huffpost.com](http://www.huffpost.com). Accessed September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> [www.cdc.com](http://www.cdc.com). Accessed September 2015.

<sup>3</sup>[www.abcnews.go.com](http://www.abcnews.go.com). Accessed September 2015.

<sup>4</sup>[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com). Accessed September 2015.

<sup>5</sup>[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org). Accessed September 2015.

## e-Thoughts — Are you spontaneous?

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*Our e-Thoughts feature provides close-up views on topics and areas of interest from everyday life.*

This month, the newsletter theme is “Be ready for anything.” Actually, I’ve always dreamed of being spontaneous. You know: ready at a moment’s notice. Ready for fun 24/7.

But it’s usually easier said than done. So lately I’ve been trying to be less structured. That can be hard with a job, family, dog and lots of responsibilities. But I have found some satisfying ways to do it.

- I recently drove five hours round-trip in one day to meet an out-of-state cousin for lunch. It was a spur of the moment idea that came up on a free day for both of us. We spoke on the phone in the morning, agreed we missed each other terribly and just hopped into our cars to meet “in the middle”. It was great fun to do it without planning, worrying about traffic and so forth.
- My husband and I took a few last minute trips to the beach on summer weekends. The nearest beach is 1.5 hours away and we used to plan for a week or more before going. This summer we enjoyed being more impulsive.

- Dinner home or out? We’ve had fun recently flipping a coin and letting chance decide! We just do it once a week — it can get expensive!

How do you feel about being spontaneous? Is it fun? Difficult? As one who has been trying to loosen up a bit, I can tell you it feels terrific!

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All calls are confidential, except as required by law. This material is for informational purposes only. Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however, it is subject to change.