SLEEP AND PARENTAL MENTAL HEALTH

Here is Tip #2 of Dr. Satin's top five tips to cope better with sleep disruption after having a baby:

Top tip #2: Ask for help and accept help

Social support can go a long way in helping parents adjust to parenthood. First time mothers who report high levels of social support, whether it be emotional or practical, report fewer depressive symptoms at 6 weeks post-partum. Not only does the support lighten the load, but it also increases mothers' sense of self-efficacy as a parent.

If you are fortunate enough to have family or friends who are willing and able to help care for your baby, relying on them can provide more opportunities to rest and to nap. If you are a person who previously tried to do everything yourself, it may take some effort to accept help and especially to ask for help. Doing so can really benefit you and your baby, so I encourage you to experiment with acting differently, even if it's a bit uncomfortable at first.

In my clinical practice, I have observed that having a baby can force new parents to face complicated family dynamics that they previously pushed aside. If the relationships can be positive, it can be a good time to work through conflicts and set new boundaries. Parents can benefit from additional support, and babies can benefit from additional loving caregivers.

Part of accepting help means that we need to practice trust. Many parents, especially first-time parents, have difficulty letting go and trusting even the most capable and loving caregivers, even their own partners. If this is you, consider letting others take care of your baby despite your anxiety, beginning with short periods and building up to longer periods. As you let others take over more, you will become less anxious and other caregivers will have an opportunity to bond and learn how to best care for baby.

If you have trouble relaxing enough to nap while others are caring for your baby in your home, I recommend that you ask them to take baby out of your home for that time, so that you will not be paying attention to baby's cries or noises. Letting go of control in this way is an important practice for some parents who have trouble prioritizing their own well-being. In the end, it will benefit everyone, because a burned-out parent is not at their best.

More coming soon...