

One Year as a New Father



“I didn’t realise how much I would love her.” With his daughter recently having celebrated her 1st birthday, and with a son on the way, David reflects on the delights, obstacles and surprises of his first year of fatherhood.

When my girlfriend Hazel first told me she was pregnant, it came as the biggest surprise of my life. We were a young couple who had just moved out for the first time and were starting to enjoy life independently. I knew I wanted kids one day but life doesn’t always wait for one day. This was right now.

My daughter, Evie, still surprises me every day. She’s happy, beautiful, and everything I never knew I needed in my life.

What do you wish you knew about being a parent before you became one?

How much dribble there is! It’s true, there’s so much of it. Thinking seriously, you do lose a lot of time as a parent. Sometimes I get frustrated that I can’t go out to the shed to work on my railway because Evie needs me or is having a fussy evening. Your time and attention gets completely rearranged.

I wish I had known how fast babies grow. It really does go by as quickly as they say, and Evie is already a year old and standing up on her own. I’m trying to make the most of each stage.

I didn’t realise how much I would love my daughter. I love Hazel, of course, but until Evie was born, I never knew it was possible to feel that strongly about someone.

How did you connect to your daughter pre-birth?

Hazel and I cuddled a lot so I could feel close to her and Evie. I loved seeing the baby scans and accompanying my girlfriend on hospital visits. We had a few concerns with Evie because of her reduced movement, so we went to hospital a few times and got to hear her heartbeat, which was reassuring. I also tried reading to Hazel’s baby bump a couple of times, but did feel a bit silly doing it!

What advice can you give about parenting?

In terms of the delivery, it helps to be as prepared as possible. That goes for the dads too – there's a lot of advice about packing a hospital bag for the mother, but dads should also have one. Take something to keep yourself entertained. If it's a long labour, especially overnight, you might end up sleeping on the floor. Pack spare, warm clothes and even a blanket and pillow. I had snacks and energy drinks as well!

For mums who give birth in hospital, rest while you can. There's an urge to start actively parenting straight away but there'll be loads of time for that when you get home. Recover while you've got the support of the midwives there with you and don't pressure yourself to rush home.

Prepare for baby blues. Not everyone gets them but Hazel did, and I learned that they are a natural part of the childbirth process. I did my best to support her and listen to how she was feeling.

Also, accept that you'll start singing random kids songs while you're doing the laundry! They are annoying but so catchy.

What do you do to help your daughter's development?

We've been repeating words, giving Evie plenty of tummy time and encouraging her to crawl and walk. When we speak to her, we try to talk clearly, not just using baby talk.

We like to let her do the things she enjoys for longer. For example, she loves bath time, so we have toys to turn the time into a game that she can enjoy.

In terms of food, we let Evie lead the way with her weaning, trying new foods and letting her choose what to eat and how much. We have been giving more solids as she's gotten her teeth, so she can learn how to chew foods rather than only having puree.

How have you found lockdown life as a new parent?

It has been tough for us. We'd like to take Evie out more. She likes her walks and often has a nappy in her buggy while we walk along, but she hasn't seen much of her family and Hazel hasn't been able to take her to baby classes or mums and tots session. So I think she is missing out on a lot of the socialisation she would normally get.

I think lockdown has made her quite shy, so she didn't like visiting people over summer when the restrictions were relaxed. Even with her great Nan, she was grumbly at first and it took her a while to come round to the idea of a new person.

You do get more family time in lockdown though, as evenings and weekends that might have been spent visiting extended family has been spent at home, just the three of us.

Lastly, what are you looking forward to?

I'm looking forward to meeting Evie's little brother who will be the second addition to the family. I can't wait to see them both grow, enjoy themselves and discover hobbies and interests. Perhaps I can get one of them into liking model trains! I'm taking each day as it comes and doing the best I can for my family, so I'm excited to see what happens.