

thriv·ol·o·gy

In My Own Words

A Curiosity Deck
for Young Parents

For postpartum care & wellness



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About these cards

These cards are for young parents like you, who want to understand their postpartum bodies and emotions, changing relationships, and new responsibilities.

Each card begins with “I am curious about...” to help you explore real questions. These cards offer clear, supportive info—and give you the power to speak up and get the care you deserve.

How to use these cards

- Start wherever you are—there's no right way to use these cards.
- Read them on your own or with someone you trust.
- Focus on what feels helpful and skip the rest.
- Bring questions or concerns to a trusted professional.
- Scan the QR code any time for extra info or resources.

Hey new parent, these cards are for you.

Becoming a parent is a big deal, whether it just happened or you're getting ready. You deserve real answers, never judgment.

This deck helps you explore what's going on with your body, feelings, relationships, and choices after birth.

And remember: you've got this!

As a young parent, you...

- Deserve honest info and judgment-free care.
- Have the right to ask questions and set boundaries.
- Know your body and baby best.
- Are still **you**—more than just a parent.
- Deserve support that sees your full story.
- Are not alone: you have the power to ask others for what you need.

Dear youth-supporting professional:

These cards are for new young parents to explore their needs and curiosities.

If a young parent brings these to an appointment, make space for stories and listen with care. Your openness, empathy, and respect can go a long way, even when you don't have all the answers.

Also, offer to connect them to other professionals for additional support.

Remember that young parents...

- Deserve honest information and care without judgment, including from you.
- Have the right to ask questions and set boundaries.
- Know their own body and baby best.
- Are still themselves—being a parent is just one part of who they are.
- Deserve support that honors their whole story.
- Are not alone; they have the power to speak up for what they need.

KEY

Each card is color-coded to match these topics, making it easy to find the ones most relevant to you:

-  Mental health
-  Feeding
-  Body changes & healing
-  Relationships & boundaries
-  Sex & intimacy

This is not a complete list, as other curiosities might come up for you, too!

KEY

These cards include small icons to show the type of professional(s) they're most connected to:



Medical care: Physical healing, checkups, birth control, and baby health.



Emotional support: For managing emotions and building coping tools.



Home & daily life support: In-home care and meeting daily needs.



Feeding & nutrition: Breastfeeding, pumping, bottle-feeding, and food support.

Medical care



OB-GYNs, midwives, or family physicians

They support you with postpartum checkups and emotional well-being. They also offer guidance on things like healing, birth control, and future pregnancies.

Pediatricians or family doctors

They check your baby's health and growth and often ask how you're doing, too—regarding sleep, feeding, mood, and more.

Medical care



Sexual health providers

They support with birth control, STI testing, periods, and family planning.

Physical therapists or pelvic floor therapists

They can help with healing and strengthening your body after birth, including bladder leaks, pain during sex, or core strength.

TYPES OF PROFESSIONALS

Emotional support



Peer or young parent mentors

They've been through it and get you. They listen and remind you you're not alone.

Social workers or case managers

They connect you with housing, childcare, food, mental health, legal help, and other services.

Therapists

They support you when you are facing postpartum depression, anxiety, trauma, or stress.

Home & daily life support



Doulas

They support you before, during, and after birth. They can help you understand what you're going through, how to feed and care for your baby, and how to adjust to your new life.

Home-visiting nurses

They visit your home to check on you and your baby, support feeding, and connect you to programs like WIC or Medicaid.

Feeding & nutrition



Lactation consultants

They help with breastfeeding: latching, positioning, pain, and milk supply.

WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) providers

They offer free support with food vouchers, nutrition education, and breastfeeding guidance.

TYPES OF PROFESSIONALS

As a new parent, finding support takes time. Along the way, you'll meet a lot of professionals—like nurses, social workers, and counselors—who listen, guide, and show up for you.

Some you may already know; others you haven't met yet. Gradually growing your support team can make a big difference.

You can use these cards at appointments to start conversations and get the support you deserve.



Mental Health



Parenthood can be a whirlwind.

Alongside love and joy, you might also feel stressed, sad, anxious, or not quite like yourself. Maybe it's hard to connect, or everything just feels overwhelming.

Whatever's on your mind, you're not alone—and there's no single “right” way to feel.

Use these cards to start real conversations with a professional, someone you trust, or other young parents.



I am curious
whether it's
common to feel
happy, angry,
overwhelmed,
sad, guilty, or not
quite myself after
having a baby.



It's typical to feel many emotions after having a baby—even joy and tiredness all in one day. You might even feel guilty for not feeling the way you thought you “should.”

Talking to someone you trust can make a big difference.

You can tell a therapist or social worker: *“I’m doing my best, but I still feel like I’m not enough.”*

Or ask a peer mentor: *“How did you find your new normal as a parent?”*





I'm curious if
what I'm feeling
is more than
stress, like
postpartum
depression or
anxiety.



If you're withdrawing from loved ones, feeling disconnected, or worrying about hurting your baby, you might be experiencing postpartum depression or anxiety.

You're not alone—postpartum depression and anxiety are common for new parents, especially for young parents.¹

If these feelings last or make daily life harder, tell an OB-GYN or midwife: *"I think this is more than stress—can I get screened for postpartum depression or anxiety?"*





I'm curious
about whether
it's okay for me
to feel frustrated
with my baby.



It's common to feel frustrated—you're tired and giving so much. That doesn't mean you don't love your baby. It means you're human.

When it feels like too much, take a break by placing your baby in a safe spot, like a crib, so you can breathe.

You can ask a therapist or social worker: *"What are some ways I can manage my frustration safely?"*



I'm curious if, or
when, I'll feel like
myself again.



Life after birth brings big changes—physically, emotionally, and socially. It's typical to feel different or unsure of who you are right now.

You may not feel exactly the same as before, but over time, you will find your "new normal." That's part of becoming a parent. You're still healing, growing, and figuring things out.

Connecting with other young parents or peer mentors can help, too—you're not alone.





I'm curious about
how to cope with
feeling alone and
isolated, especially
from friends who
don't have kids.



You're not alone in feeling this way, especially if people around you can't relate. Connecting with other young parents can help you feel less alone and build a new community.

Groups like Young United Parents (YUP!) or Young Parent Collective offer a free and safe place for young parents to find community—local or national.

You can say to a friend or a peer mentor: *"I could really use company, even just a quick call."*





I'm curious
*about how to
take care of
myself when I
barely have time
or when it feels
selfish to do it.*



It's important to remind yourself that caring for yourself **is** caring for your baby, too. Even small moments—like stepping outside or a few deep breaths—can make a difference.

It's okay if putting yourself first feels new or hard. Keep trying and practicing; it gets easier over time.

When you're ready, you might ask for help, like: *"Can someone watch the baby for a little while so I can rest?"*

Your feelings and needs matter.



I'm curious
*about when to
seek professional
help and what
mental health
support is
available for
new parents.*



You deserve support through all the changes that come with becoming a parent. Asking for help is a sign of strength.

It's always a good time to seek help, especially if scary or heavy feelings stick around for more than two weeks or make daily life harder.

You might say to a therapist or social worker: ***"What options do I have for mental health support?"***

Many places offer free or low-cost counseling, support groups, and postpartum programs.



I'm curious
*about whether
new dads and
non-birthing
parents can
experience
postpartum
depression or
anxiety, too.*



Just like birthing parents, new dads and non-birthing parents can also experience postpartum depression or anxiety. The big changes, stress, and lack of sleep after a baby arrives can affect anyone.

If you or your partner feel angry, anxious, overwhelmed, or notice big changes in appetite and sleep, it might be time to seek professional help.





Feeding

Feeding a baby looks different for every parent. You might breastfeed, pump, use formula, combo feed, or find another way that works for you.

What matters most is choosing what feels doable, helps your baby grow, and keeps you well, too.

For support, talking with a lactation consultant can help. Your OB-GYN, midwife, or WIC provider can recommend one.

Also, ask them about any free formula, coupons, or breast-feeding supplies!

***I'm curious about
the different options
to feed my baby.***



There's no one "right" way to feed your baby—breast, formula, pumping, combo, or donor milk.

Take your time, ask questions, and adjust as you go. What matters most is that your baby is fed nutritiously and you feel supported.

Ask yourself: *"What feels best for my body and mental health? Does my baby have specific needs? How does feeding fit into my day-to-day life?"*



***I'm curious if
breastfeeding
can be hard or
painful.***



It's common to feel some soreness, discomfort, or bleeding in the first the 1 to 2 weeks of breastfeeding.

Sharp pain or cracked nipples could mean that the latch needs help. Ask a lactation consultant to check you latch or suggest feeding positions.

If you notice redness, swelling, or fever, it could be inflammation or an infection.² Reach out to an OB-GYN or family physician.

Feeding should feel comfortable for you and your baby once your body adjusts.





***I'm curious
about using
formula to
feed my baby.***



Formula is a safe, healthy choice. Use ready-to-feed or mix powdered formula with clean water.

No matter how they are fed, babies can grow strong and stay bonded to their parents as long as they are meeting their nutritional needs.

Ask a young parent mentor or a trusted professional: *"I'm considering formula—can you share any tips?"*



***I'm curious
about combo
feeding and
if that might
confuse my
baby.***



Combo feeding, which combines breastfeeding and using formula, can offer flexibility.

Some babies adjust quickly, while others need time. Try offering one food source consistently for several weeks.³

Paced bottle feeding, which is holding the bottle in such a way that milk comes out slowly, can also give the baby breaks.

You can ask a lactation consultant about “nipple confusion,” timing, milk supply, and support to make combo feeding work for you.



I'm curious
*about how to
handle pressure
or judgment
from others
about how I feed
my baby.*



You might hear different opinions, but only you know what works for you and your baby. How you feed your baby is your choice.

It can help to say: *"Thanks for the advice, but I'm making the best choice for my baby."* A young parent mentor or therapist can support you with boundaries and handling pressure.

You could ask: *"How do I explain my feeding choices respectfully?"* or *"Can we practice what to say when someone questions me?"*



I'm curious
*about what to
do if my baby
won't latch and
how to make
feeding less
stressful.*



Feeding takes practice for both of you, and it's okay if latching feels tricky.

Gentle skin-to-skin time—holding your baby against your bare chest under a blanket—can help. Trying different positions or creating a quieter space may make it easier, too.

Many new parents get help from lactation consultants, home-visiting nurses, or WIC providers. It's okay to say: *"This has been hard—can you help me or suggest other feeding options?"*



***I'm curious
about stopping
breastfeeding.***



Weaning from breastfeeding to other foods is your choice. As you introduce solid food, both you and your baby will need to adjust, and it's okay to go at your own pace.

Stop when it feels right for your body, schedule, baby's needs, or mental health. You might feel a combination of relief, sadness, or guilt—these are all valid feelings.

A lactation consultant can support you through the transition. Ask: *"Can you help me talk through weaning options?"*



I'm curious
*about how to
keep feeding my
baby when I go
back to work
or school.*



You have the legal right to take breaks and have a private space to feed or pump. Many schools and workplaces must provide this, and these rights are federally protected under laws like Title IX (pronounced as Title Nine).

Ask your school nurse or work supervisor: *“What are my pumping rights at school or work?”*

Also ask a home-visiting nurse or lactation consultant: *“How can I still feed my baby while I’m away?”*





Body Changes & Healing

Your body has done something incredible! You may feel pressure to “bounce back,” but healing takes time.

You may have some bleeding, pain, abdominal or pelvic floor issues, or hormonal changes.

Use these cards to reflect with your OB-GYN, physician, doula, home-visiting nurse, or peer mentor about recovery and what support your body might need.

Remember, every journey is different, and everyone heals at a different pace.

I am curious
*about what to
expect as my
body recovers
after birth.*



Recovery takes time—physically and emotionally.

After a vaginal birth, healing can take 6 weeks or more.⁴ You may feel sore, have bleeding, or notice cramping.

A C-section, being major surgery, typically takes 6 to 8 weeks to heal, or more.^{5,6} You may feel sore or bruised near the incision. Watch for signs of infection like redness or unusual discharge.

Ask your OB-GYN or midwife:

“Can you help me understand what a healthy recovery looks like?”



I am curious about
how to manage
postpartum
symptoms like
bleeding, soreness,
or pain.



Give yourself time and rest whenever you can. Warm baths and gentle stretches can help with soreness, and using pads (not tampons) for bleeding may feel more comfortable.

If pain feels severe, gets worse, or doesn't go away, make sure to have it checked by a clinic or medical professional!

Tell your OB-GYN or midwife:

*"I'm having these symptoms—
can you help me understand if
everything is okay?"*



I am curious
about when it's
okay to start
exercising again.



Most doctors suggest waiting 4 to 6 weeks, and sometimes longer after a C-section, but it's important to listen to your body.

Gentle movement like walking or stretching can feel good as you heal. Avoid heavy lifting or intense exercise until your doctor gives the okay.

Ask your home-visiting nurse, OB-GYN, or midwife: *"What kind of movement is safe for me right now?"*



I am curious
*about how
hormonal
changes may
affect me.*



Postpartum hormones can make you feel extra tired, moody, or overwhelmed. Not getting enough sleep can make these feelings even stronger.

If they last more than two weeks or make daily life tough, talk to someone you trust.

You might also notice your body smells different. Breastfeeding, extra sweating, and extra fluids are typical and usually temporary.⁷ It's okay to check in with a medical professional—this is part of healing, too.



***I am curious
about bladder
and bowel
control issues.***



Problems with pelvic floor muscles happen to about half of people after childbirth.⁸ They look like:

- Leaking urine when you cough, sneeze, or laugh;
- Trouble controlling bowel movements; and
- Pressure in your pelvis.

Gentle Kegel exercises can help, but avoid heavy lifting or straining.

If you have leaking or pain, you might want to be referred to a physical therapist or a pelvic floor therapist.



I am curious
*about how to
recognize signs of
infection or other
complications
after delivery.*



You might feel sore, swollen, and have some bleeding or discharge for a few weeks. If you notice a strong smell, fever, heavy bleeding, or pain that gets worse, those could be signs of infection.

It's good to check-in—getting care early can keep you safe.

Tell an OB-GYN or midwife: *"I'm having these symptoms or discharge—can you help me understand what's going on?"*

If you feel something is off, continue to ask for what you need until you feel heard.



I am curious
*about when and
how to schedule
postpartum
checkups.*



It helps to check in with a doula, OB-GYN, or midwife about 2 to 3 weeks after birth. It gives you space to talk through how you're feeling, ask questions, and flag any concerns.

Then, plan a full postpartum exam within 6 to 12 weeks after birth. During this visit, you can talk about your healing, emotional well-being, sleep, and how you're adjusting.⁹

These visits are here to support you. You can ask: *"Can I share a few things that have felt hard lately?"*



I am curious
about how long it
takes for my body
to feel or look
“normal” again.



Your body just did something incredible, and healing takes time. There's no race to "get back" to anything—how you look now can still be healthy and strong.

Some changes may fade in weeks; others, like stretch marks or a softer belly, might stay as reminders of what you've been through.

Give yourself patience. Your body is still your own, and it's finding its new balance.





Relationships & Boundaries

After having a baby, your needs around touch, space, sex, or connection may change.

You have the right to set boundaries, say no, ask for what you need, and feel safe in all relationships—whether with a partner, your parents, friends, or others.

Talk to a therapist, doula, or case worker to come up with words that feel right to navigate shifting relationships. These cards can help you reflect and start those conversations.

I am curious
about feeling
overstimulated
by physical touch
and needing space.

Some parents feel overstimulated or “touched out” after giving so much physically.

Wanting less touch, even from people you love, doesn’t mean something is wrong. You can care about others and still need space.

You might say to a friend, partner, or relative: *“I love you, but I need some space right now.”*

A young parent mentor or therapist can also help you find the words that feel right for you.



***I am curious
about why my
relationships
feel different or
distant after
having a baby.***

It's common for relationships to shift after having a baby. You might feel disconnected from friends, family, or even your partner. That can be painful or confusing.

Relationships can be like seasons—some come and go. It's okay to outgrow people, grieve what's changed, and want connections that match where you are now.

A therapist or home-visiting nurse can help. Try: *"I don't feel like myself in this relationship—can you help me make sense of it?"*



I am curious
*about setting
boundaries with
visitors, even
when they
mean well.*

You're allowed to set boundaries, even with people who care about you. After having a baby, your rest, healing, and bonding with your baby come first.

To friends and family, it's okay to say: *"We're not ready for visitors yet,"* or *"Please call before coming over."*

Boundaries aren't cruel—they protect your peace and help relationships stay healthy.

People don't have to agree, but they need to respect your "no."



I am curious
about how to
speak up when
someone crosses
my boundaries.

Protecting your peace doesn't mean pushing people away—it means making space to breathe.

If someone crosses your boundaries, say: *"That doesn't work for me,"* or *"Please stop, I've said no."*

If it's hard to speak up, try practicing with a peer mentor, therapist, or social worker. Say: *"I'm trying to set boundaries, but they don't stick—can we practice how to say it clearly?"*



I am curious
about how to
advocate for myself
with healthcare
professionals,
especially when I feel
like I'm not being
listened to.

You deserve to be heard and treated with respect.

If you're not feeling listened to, try clearly stating your concerns or repeating what you need:

- *“Could you share why you're recommending this for me?”*
- *“Can you explain that another way? I want to be sure I understand.”*

A patient advocate can help you understand your options. If you still feel dismissed, it's okay to look for another professional.



I am curious
*about what
a healthy
relationship
looks like.*

A healthy relationship feels safe, respectful, and supportive.

Talk to a therapist or social worker if you are:

- Being pressured or controlled.
- Feeling afraid, alone, or blamed.
- Not able to rest, speak up, or make your own choices.
- Not included in decisions about your baby.

Say: *"I don't feel free to make my own choices—can you help me think through my next steps?"*



I am curious
*about how
to handle friends
who act differently
now that I have
a baby.*

Becoming a parent can change friendships, and that's tough. Some people may not get your new reality, but others will grow with you.

Keep the connections that feel right, and know it's okay to build new ones with other parents, family, or professionals you trust.

To a friend, try saying: *"I know I've been quiet—it's been a lot with the baby. I still care about you. Can we find new ways to stay close?"*



I am curious
*about how to talk
to my partner or
co-parent when I
feel like I'm doing
everything.*

It's okay to speak up if you feel overwhelmed or unsupported. Caring for a baby is a big job, and sharing the load matters—for your well-being and your baby's.

You can say:

- *"I'm feeling burned out—can we talk about how to split things up more?"*
- *"I need more help with the baby. Can we figure this out together?"*

If it's hard to have these conversations, a therapist, doula, or peer mentor can help you.





Sex & Intimacy

Sex and relationships might feel different after having a baby. That's normal.

You might feel unsure or nervous and notice changes in sex drive or pain. You may also be thinking about birth control or planning for future pregnancies.

You don't have to rush—go at your own speed.

You can bring these cards to start conversations around intimacy and healing with a professional like a nurse, midwife, or therapist.

I am curious
about when it
might be safe—or
feel right—for me
to have sex again.



There's no one right time to have sex again—only if or when you feel ready. It's also common not to feel like having sex after a baby.¹⁰ Your body and mind are healing.

Physically, it's often safe after about 6 weeks, but healing looks different for everyone. Emotionally, it may take longer.

A midwife or OB-GYN can help you understand what's safe for your body. You can ask: ***"Can we talk about what's healthy or safe around sex and intimacy while I'm healing?"***



I am curious
*about how
to navigate sex
and relationships
as a young parent.*



Your identity and experiences shape your feelings about intimacy in ways that might differ from what's often talked about.

You may notice changes in how you see your body or what you want from a partner. Honest conversations about what feels good and off-limits can help keep sex safe and fun.

You deserve relationships that celebrate who you are and your parenting journey. Therapists or support groups with similar experiences can help



I am curious
*about what to
do if I don't feel
ready for sex,
but my partner is.*



It's okay if you're not ready for sex, even if your partner is. That doesn't make you a bad partner or co-parent.

If someone is pressuring you, acting impatient, or making you feel guilty for not wanting to have sex, that's a red flag.

To them, you could say: *"I'm not ready yet. I'm focused on healing and parenting right now. I need space, and I need you to respect that."*

A therapist can help you practice what you might say to a partner.



I am curious
*about how trauma,
stress, or past
experiences might
affect how I feel
about sex now.*



Your past can absolutely shape how you feel now. If sex brings up fear, numbness, or flashbacks, you're not alone—many people carry trauma that affects intimacy. If it feels challenging, it's okay to ask for help.

Consider reaching out to a therapist and saying: ***“Some things from my past are coming up—I might need support before I feel ready.”***

If finding the words feels tough, you can hand them this card to begin the conversation.



I am curious
*about how to feel
good in my body
again and enjoy
intimacy.*



Be kind to yourself—your body has done something powerful, and it is healing.

Low-intensity activities like stretching, gentle touch, or movement can help you reconnect with your body.

You could ask a trusted friend or therapist: *“How can I feel good and comfortable in my body again?”*

Remember, intimacy and pleasure aren't only about sex with a partner—they're about feeling good, connected, and confident in your own body.



I am curious about
what to do if I feel
pressured to be on
birth control.



Sometimes people mean well but might pressure you because of their own beliefs. Your body and your future are yours. No one else gets to decide what works for you—only you.

If your doctor pressures you to use birth control against your wishes, that's a red flag—it may be time to consider finding a new doctor.

You can tell a sexual health provider: ***"I need to explore all my birth control options and make my own informed choice. Can you support me?"***



I am curious
*about how birth
control might affect
my body, mood, or
sex life.*



Everyone has a different experience of hormonal birth control, and different options can affect people differently.

If you're noticing changes, like pain, spotting, mood shifts, or low sex drive, it's okay to ask for a different option. You know your body best.

Tell a sexual health provider:

"This method doesn't feel right—can we talk about other ones?"



I am curious
*about how
soon I could get
pregnant again
after giving birth.*



Pregnancy is possible within a few weeks after birth, even before your first period returns.¹¹

Providers recommend waiting between 6 and 18 months¹² before getting pregnant after having a baby to give the body time to heal.

Your decision when or if to get pregnant is personal. You might discuss with an OB-GYN, midwife, or physician: *"I've heard pregnancy can happen soon after birth. Can we go over my options so I can figure out what feels right for me?"*



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