



Fading friendships

Having a baby can be a testing time for friendships. Here's how to make sure your relationship survives the storm...

The arrival of your baby turns your world upside down, but it's not just the sheer volume of washing and lack of sleep that will take you by surprise. Relationships with pals who you've known for years can be affected too. "The basis of friendship is that we pick people who are like us and share our vulnerabilities," says therapist Marisa Peer (marisapeer.com). "If you have a baby and your friend doesn't, it can become difficult to relate to each other." It's common

for pre-baby friendships to go through a rough patch during this transition, but it doesn't have to be the end. "A good friendship can weather any storm," says Marisa. "All it takes is time, attention and compromise."

When cracks appear

The saying 'make new friends but keep the old,' can be difficult to follow when you're housebound with a crying baby and have buddies who want to go out. So what do you do if you stop hearing from your pals?

"You've just had a baby which is new, exciting and wonderful," explains Marisa. "Although you can't quite believe what you've gained, your friends are focused on what they've lost – your attention. That's why it's important to get them involved in this new chapter of your life."

There are many reasons why your relationship changes – the spare time you used to have for socialising is now reserved for your baby, and some of your childless friends may be envious, or feel they have less in common

with you now. The only way to resolve the issue is to understand each other's points of view...

Your argument: "I have new responsibilities"

When lost in a sea of dirty nappies and late-night feeds, a cup of tea and a chat with an old pal can work wonders. But while you may want to talk about sleep strategies or your recent chickenpox crisis, some of your chums may struggle to participate or look engaged.

"It's normal to feel left out by your social circle because your pre-baby friends will lack understanding of your new situation," says Marisa. "Your baby takes precedence over everything, as it should, but the only way your friends will begin to 'get' your new life is if you make them an active part of it." Invite them round for a heart-to-heart and explain that even though you have new priorities, you need them for support and advice. Showing that they are still important to you will mean a lot.

Your pal's defence: "You're never here"

To you she's being self-centred and lacks understanding, but to her you appear distant and unavailable. "Take a minute to think about how she's coping," says Marisa. "Nature floods new mums with hormones that make them want to be around their baby 24/7, not leaving much time for anyone else. Before the baby arrived

your friend was high priority and now she's not, and she knows it." To preserve the relationship, let her know you're still (mostly) the same person and you care about more than just the baby stuff. "Take an interest in her life and what's she doing and she'll soon repay the favour and ask about you and your baby," says Marisa. You may even find you enjoy living a social life vicariously through her!

Building bridges

Strengthening relationships with old friends can be a challenge when they're all out drinking and you're at home with a newborn. We show you how to make it work...

Girls' night out

Few of us understand just how much motherhood changes our friendships until it's actually happening. "Realising you haven't spoken in months to those who you used to speak to on a daily basis can be difficult, but arranging to catch-up can change that," explains Marisa. "Dedicate the little spare time you have to making sure old friendships flourish with regular shopping or coffee trips. But if you're going out with a big group for drinks and a gossip, leave your baby with your partner or a sitter as your child will only distract you." A meet-up once

DID YOU KNOW?

28% of UK mums say they're jealous of other mums' social lives

BABY BORE BLOCKER!

It's natural to want to share pictures of your baby on social media, but if your friends feel you're uploading too many, they can block them. The Facebook app, 'Unbaby.Me', offers the option of removing snaps from feeds or replacing them with images of cats, dogs or even bacon! A good way to stop over-sharing or just plain rude? Tell us your thoughts on Facebook or tweet us @PrimaBaby_



every two weeks should start to get your friendship back on track.

Wedding dilemma

Attending important moments in your friend's lives is vital to strengthening your bond, but be aware there will be times when she won't want your newborn around, like on her wedding day. "If your friend suggests getting a sitter, you need to understand it's nothing personal. A child screaming throughout the ceremony isn't ideal," explains Marisa. "But if you really can't bear to be away from your newborn or you're breastfeeding, make a pact with your pal to leave the service if your baby starts playing up."

Home visits

Having a chat while your pal bonds with the baby can start to pave the way for a less fractured relationship. "As best friends, it's natural that you want her to be a part of your baby's life. Make her godmother and arrange times she can pop round and have quality time with your little one," says Marisa. But a wailing baby who just won't settle can be difficult for a childless pal to handle, so choose your moments carefully. "Of course, if she becomes irritated with the noise it'll upset you, but making sure that your child's well rested and fed beforehand will ensure no awkward moments occur," adds Marisa.

Why not... make mummy mates?

The good news is motherhood can be a gateway to making some fantastic new friends. Postnatal classes and baby and toddler groups are the perfect places to meet like-minded women who share your interests and want to talk about child-rearing techniques, nappy duty and all other mum-related trivia. Sign up to a class in your area today. **PS**

Real mums say...

WE ASKED REAL MUMS ON FACEBOOK ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES OF MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIPS AFTER BABIES...

✿ "I was the only mum in my group and no longer speak to most of my old friends. As soon as I became pregnant, that was the end of a lot of friendships." *Layla Fletcher*

✿ "The friendships that matter are the ones that last, even if you are pregnant. You shouldn't need to work at maintaining them. Plus you make lots of new friends when you have children." *Emma Weiss*

✿ "When I was pregnant for the first time, I was the only one among my friendship group. For a while, nothing was different but most of those friendships have fizzled out. I think that's just how things go. I've made some wonderful friends in parenthood and wouldn't change a thing." *Fiona McGrother*

✿ "I don't think people without children always understand how much your life changes when you have them." *Becky McKenna*

✿ "I was the only one of my friends to have a baby and I moved away from my three best friends to be with my partner. I find that the way to keep my friendships going, besides texting and chatting, is to give myself a day off from being mum. I go to visit my friends and we can go to the cinema or just sit in a coffee shop and chat for hours!" *Sam Roberts*



✿ "I use Facebook to keep in contact and I don't post lots of baby stuff on my page so my friends don't get sick of it." *Eileen Teo*

✿ "I was the only one in my group of friends to have a baby and we joked when I was pregnant that 'we' were having a baby. My friends now love meeting up with me and my daughter, and are actually disappointed if I see them without her!" *Lucy Elder*

✿ "I was the first out of our group of friends to have children. Ten years later, one of my oldest friends is godmother to all three of my children and our other friend is preparing for motherhood this summer, so I finally get to spoil a little bundle who isn't my own." *Tanya Naylor-Hands*

✿ "I did find it hard work as you can't do the things you used to do and it takes some adjusting for your friends. Some were happy to muddle along with me and my son, others weren't – that's their loss." *Laura Ellen Head*

✿ "Now my friends are all having children, I am enjoying being able to sit back and relax while they suffer from sleepless nights! It took effort to keep friends but it was worth it and we are now a very close group." *Jennifer Bruton*

✿ "I still am the only one with children. Some of them cannot have children, some don't want any. I love my friends and it is hard, but we muddle through." *Lyn Newman*