

Card 15: When expecting

Introduction

To be expecting a child means a lot of big changes to different aspects of life: to become a father, to create a relation to the newborn and to find balance between work-life and family life.

Therefore it can be useful to practice expressing your emotions and needs, and to listen to your partner's needs in these times.

Info

Pregnancy is a time for preparation for both parents. Mothers might have a head start through carrying the child in their womb but you as a partner can also engage in many different ways. Amongst other things you can participate in ultrasound screenings, family counseling sessions, and attend preparatory courses for families. You can strengthen your attachment to the baby by singing or talking to it near the mother's stomach or by touching the stomach when the mother approves.

Every father does not feel comfortable in actively participating in the pregnancy but by supporting the mother you can affect her sense of wellbeing and in extension also the wellbeing of the baby. Fathers can also feel loneliness and worry during pregnancy, and sometimes one might feel that one's feelings are set aside. If you worry it's good to talk openly about it with your partner, a healthcare professional or a friend.

Aim of meetup

To reflect on thoughts, feelings and experiences regarding pregnancy and the coming birth.

Re-connect to last meetup

What did you bring with you from last meetup?

Is there something you would like to discuss further?

Warmup — Finish the sentence with the first thing that springs to mind
(regarding the coming birth)

- I am curious about...
- I am looking forward to...
- To become a father feels...
- The coming birth feels...
- When the baby is born I feel...
- During the first days with the baby I want to...

Discuss in the group or with your partner

Discussion 1:

What has surprised you during the pregnancy? What has been easy, what has been hard?

Possible follow-up

- *Have you talked with other parents or fathers about the pregnancy?*
- *What do you think the mother of the baby is expecting and needing from you right now, at this stage of the pregnancy?*
- *Have you become more sensitive?*

Discussion 2:

Do you feel you have gotten support during the pregnancy by professionals or other parents?

Possible follow-up

- *Can you ask for support?*
- *What kind of support would you want from professionals?*
- *What kind of support would you like from parents or friends?*

To sum up

Is there anything you would like to discuss further?

Discussion 3:

Before the birth feelings of joy, curiosity, worry and fear might appear. What kind of feelings and thoughts does the birth awake in you at the moment?

Possible follow-up

- *Have you talked about the coming birth with your partner?
How can you support her in the best way?*
- *What kind of support do you need yourself?*
- *Do you feel comfortable attending the birth?*

Homework:

Tell your colleagues you are about to become a father if you haven't already. If relevant, ask how they have felt about becoming a parent themselves.

With consent from your partner put your hand on her belly. Lightly caress the belly, you can for instance use coconut oil if your partner wants it. How does your baby respond to the touch? What do you think it is thinking?

With consent from your partner put your face near the belly and talk or sing to the baby. How does your baby respond to you?

Extra-material

You can find Folkhälsans pregnancy diary in English by following this link

<https://www.folkhalsan.fi/en/aktivitet/vuxna/vanta-barn/pregnancy-diary/>