



Pregnancy, birth and early parenting can bring many changes. Alongside joy, excitement and hope, this time can also feel demanding and emotional. For rainbow families, the perinatal period may include many of the same adjustments as other parents, as well as extra planning, conversations and decisions along the way. Families may come to parenthood through fertility treatment, donor conception, surrogacy, fostering, adoption, co-parenting or previous relationships, and each path can bring its own emotional, practical or legal considerations. While every family's experience is different, feeling seen, supported and understood can make a meaningful difference.

### Common Experiences & Support Needs

Every family's experience is different. Many rainbow families describe the path to parenthood as deeply meaningful, and sometimes more intentional because of the planning involved. At the same time, this period can bring added pressures. Some families may have extra support needs, including wanting care that feels inclusive, navigating how their family is recognised, or finding people who truly understand their experience. Recognising these early can help you find support that feels right for you and your family.

**Inclusive care can make a difference.** Feeling safe, respected and understood in healthcare and community settings can make it easier to ask questions, attend appointments and feel more at ease. You deserve care that recognises your family structure without assumptions and uses language that feels inclusive and affirming.

**Parenting roles may take extra conversations.** Rainbow families often do a lot of thinking and planning before a baby arrives. It can help to keep checking in about feeding, leave, night wakes, finances, appointments and how each parent would like their role to be recognised, both at home and in wider settings.

**Connection can grow in different ways.** Bonding does not always happen instantly, and this can be especially important to remember if a parent is not genetically related to the baby or has had a different path into parenthood. Connection often builds through everyday care, time and shared experiences.

**Supportive community matters.** Being around people who affirm you and your family can help you feel less alone. This might include friends, family, chosen family, other rainbow parents, community groups or trusted health professionals. For many parents, connecting with others who have had similar experiences can bring reassurance, practical ideas and a stronger sense of belonging.

**Outside pressures can affect wellbeing.** Comments, assumptions or the need to explain your family to others can feel tiring, especially during a time of change. Experiences of stigma, exclusion or discrimination can also take a toll. Setting boundaries and protecting your energy can be an important part of caring for yourself.

### Ways To Support Yourself

There are many small ways to support yourself during this parenthood transition. Even small, realistic steps can make a meaningful difference.

**Seek out inclusive support where possible.** If you can, choose health professionals, antenatal education, parent groups and services that use inclusive language, ask respectful questions and understand that families are formed in different ways. Feeling seen and affirmed can make a real difference during the perinatal period.

**Keep communication open.** Regular check-ins with your partner or support person can help you stay connected and manage expectations. Talking openly about roles, responsibilities and what support each of you needs can ease pressure and reduce misunderstandings.

**Make room for mixed emotions.** Even when parenthood is deeply wanted, it is common to feel tired, anxious, flat, irritable or unsure at times. Try to notice how you are feeling without judgement and remind yourself that ups and downs are part of adjustment for many parents.

**Stay connected to affirming people.** Support can come from many places, including partners, friends, family, chosen family, other rainbow parents, online communities or trusted professionals. Feeling understood and less alone can make the transition into parenthood feel more manageable.

**Protect your energy.** It is okay to set boundaries around questions, comments or assumptions that do not feel helpful. You do not need to explain your family to everyone, especially when your focus is on adjusting and caring for yourself and your baby.



**Build connection in your own way.** Bonding can grow over time and may look different for each parent. Everyday moments such as feeding, cuddles, skin-to-skin contact, settling, talking, singing or simply being present can all help strengthen your relationship with your baby.

**Look after the basics where you can.** Rest, food, hydration, fresh air and small moments of pause can all support wellbeing. You do not have to do everything perfectly. Small, realistic steps and accepting help when it is offered can make a difference.

### Signs You May Need Extra Support

It can help to check in with yourself during this time. If worries, low mood, stress or overwhelm are lasting for longer than two weeks or making daily life harder, extra support may help. Some signs to look out for include:

- Feeling sad, worried, irritable or on edge much of the time
- Crying often or feeling overwhelmed by everyday tasks
- Trouble sleeping even when you have the chance to rest
- Feeling disconnected from your baby, partner or yourself
- Finding it hard to enjoy things or feel like yourself
- Wanting to withdraw from people or avoid support
- Feeling like you are not coping

Perinatal anxiety and depression are common and treatable, and reaching out early can help you get the support you need.

### Support Services

You do not have to navigate this period alone. It can help to speak with your regular GP, midwife, obstetrician, fertility specialist or child and family health nurse about how you are feeling and ask about inclusive support options. Reaching out is not a sign of failure; it is a positive step towards support.

The following organisations may also offer helpful information and support.

- **Gidget Foundation Australia:** Individual psychological therapy services with a perinatal mental health clinician.
- **Rainbow Families:** Offers resources, programs and community connection for LGBTQ+ parents and carers, including peer support and inclusive antenatal education.
- **QLife:** Provides free, anonymous LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral by phone and webchat across Australia.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 000. If you need urgent mental health support, call **Lifeline** on 13 11 14 or **Beyond Blue** on 1300 22 4636.