
Maybe Baby Journal v.18

A short course on becoming a father

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Website: <http://www.maybebaby.us.com>



How to use this journal

This Journal is meant to be used as part of *MaybeBaby: A Short Course on Becoming a Father* found at <http://www.maybebaby.us.com>.

The course is intended for:

Men who are in a committed relationship and are trying to decide whether to become fathers

Men who are first-time fathers

Men who are sexually active and would like to know what they might be facing should they become fathers

Students in high school or college who are learning about becoming a parent

Additionally, I think the women in these men's lives might find the course interesting and benefit by becoming more aware of the importance and challenges of fathers.

Activities

As you become involved in reading the course, you will occasionally arrive at a page that involves a activity from the *Journal*. Bookmark where you are at in the course and complete this *Journal* assignment. When finished with the activity, continue where you left off at the course.

This *Journal* is for your use. You will not submit it as proof of participation and no one will ask you to reveal what you wrote. Each activity is an important part of your personal learning experience. Keep your Journal in a safe location so you can return and reexamine in the future. For example, you might want to retake the course in the future to refresh your learning. As you do, you might want to review what you originally wrote in the *Journal*. Your *Journal* entries can become a permanent record of what you have learned.

By keeping it safe, your journal can become something your children might treasure far in the future if you do become a father.

If you are not a father and are in a committed relationship

You are the primary focus for the course and *Journal*. The activities, information, and language relate to your experience.

If you are already a new dad

The course is intended to assist someone in making a decision about whether to have a baby. Those elements are not going to be very useful to you. Much of the course, though, deals with managing the challenges of working together with your child's mother to be effective parents. Some of the journal activities are not going to be useful to you since you already have direct experience (e.g., #7 Sleeplessness). Even so, I think you will find most of what is in the *Journal* and the course useful.

If you are a woman

I think a similar course targeted to women who are trying to decide to become moms would be great. I have written this course and *Journal* from the perspective of a father. Many of the activities here will involve you. With a little imagination, many of the challenges and ideas can relate directly to your experiences and the challenges you face. I would be interested in hearing about your experiences taking the course to help you make your own decision about becoming a parent (casmith@ksu.edu). I am glad you found the course and *Journal* and hope you find them useful.

If you are *not* in a committed relationship

You may have found the course on a web search or from a referral by friend. If you are curious about the impact of becoming a father there is much in the course that will illuminate the challenges you would face. You might be wondering what might happen if you have a sexual relationship where there is no commitment. Becoming a father will bond you with the child's mother for the rest of your lives. If this should happen, there is no going back. Walking away from a child you fathered can have terrible consequences everyone.

If you are a student

You might be taking this as part of the course. Imagine yourself in the role of a man in a committed relationship who is trying to decide whether he should become a father. As you read the course and complete assignments imagine yourself to be this person. Find a female in your class who might take the role of your partner. Taking the course and completing *Journal* assignments will teach you a lot about the demands of being a father.

#1 What I hope to accomplish

Establishing a point of beginning

As you begin the course, what are you hoping to accomplish? Why take the time to read the material and complete the course? Imagine completing the course. How will you know the your experience here was worthwhile? What has to happen from now until then for you to consider the experience successful? Identify up to five outcomes you would like to achieve.

Measuring success	My contribution

Take a look this description of success again. Can the course alone achieve this outcome? To what extent is your involvement an important part of your success? How would you measure your contribution in terms of time and effort? What will you do? For each outcome, describe what you will do to make that happen.

#2 The currents of my life

What I have experienced

As you look back at your past, what have been the experiences (currents) that push you forward? Think back to the life events you have faced that shaped who you are now. See if you can identify three or four that might have had an effect, for good or bad, on your being a father.

In the next column, check whether you want to extend (those that are beneficial) or resist (those that are corrosive) influences.

My primary currents	Extend	Resist
1		
2		
3		
4		

Let's say you have a child. When this child grows to be an adult, what would you say to him or her about the currents of your life to this point?

#3 Recreating myself

What I bring forward to my life now

Consider the currents you listed in the previous journal entry. The “from” column are key words for what you experienced from the previous chart. The “to” column is what you will do to transform the experience.

Transform each of the corrosive currents into something positive. For example, where there was alcoholism convert it into sobriety. Where there physical abuse convert it to tenderness. Transform each of the beneficial currents into your own style of extending them into the future.

Keep in mind that there are no certainties if you recall only beneficial influences. You have to be vigilant and determined to see that they continue. But your style, the way you express them will be different.

From	To

Let’s say you have a child. When this child grows to be an adult, what would you say to him or her about how you hope to transform yourself?

#4 Earning respect

From admiration to respect

In the first column identify from one or two men in your life as you were growing up you admired. You might list a father, stepfather, grandfather, teacher, coach, or clergyman. Then identify the qualities that attracted you to them.

I admired	What I observed
1	
2	

Now identify one or two men who earned your respect. As before, you might list a father, stepfather, grandfather, teacher, coach, or clergyman. Then describe what you experienced in the relationship with that person that deepened the respect. These individuals might also be someone you admire. For example, I admire my grandfather for how hard he worked as an author of adventures. More importantly, I respected his quiet and patient love for me as a child when my mother and I lived with him. And thank both him and my grandmother for being there for my mother and father.

I respected	What I experienced
1	
2	

#5 My sacrifices

The time management of priorities

Make a list of up to five activities that you enjoy. Then indicate how important the activity is to you from 1 to 5. Then rank the amount of time you have to commit to the activity from 1 to 5.

	Activity	Importance	Time
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Rank order your highest rated activities in terms of importance. Can you continue with your top two as a new dad given the time commitments? What would you have to do to continue those activities. Or would a less important activity with a lower time commitment be something that is more possible?

#6 My most challenging emotion

Expanding the heart

Rank each of the following emotions in terms of What emotion challenges you the most. Is it fear? Anger? Sadness and melancholy? Order the three emotions from the most to least challenging in the leftmost column. In the center column, list some key words for how you express the emotion. In the final column list what you think might be some of the baby behaviors that you might experience in the relationship that might trigger the emotion?

Emotion	How I express	Baby triggers

Now choose your most challenging emotion. Brainstorm ways to manage that emotion.

Ways for managing the most challenging emotion

#7 Sleeplessness

When the sandman is absent

On a Friday night, set one alarm for 3:45 am near your bed. Then set another alarm for 3:50 a.m. in a nearby room. Finally, set a third alarm next to the bed of someone in your household, a parent or roommate for example for 3:55 am. If you live alone, put the third alarm in a distant location. Be sure to let others know in your household what you are doing. When the first alarm goes off get up immediately to turn off the other two before they are triggered. Stay up for thirty minutes (don't fall asleep!) before returning to bed. The next morning shortly after you get up, record your experience below.

Then do it again Saturday night. The next day, record your experience again. Imagine not two days but 100 nights of doing this (probably more!). Your experience of two nights is only a brief glance at what you would be facing. Then summarize what you learned from the experience.

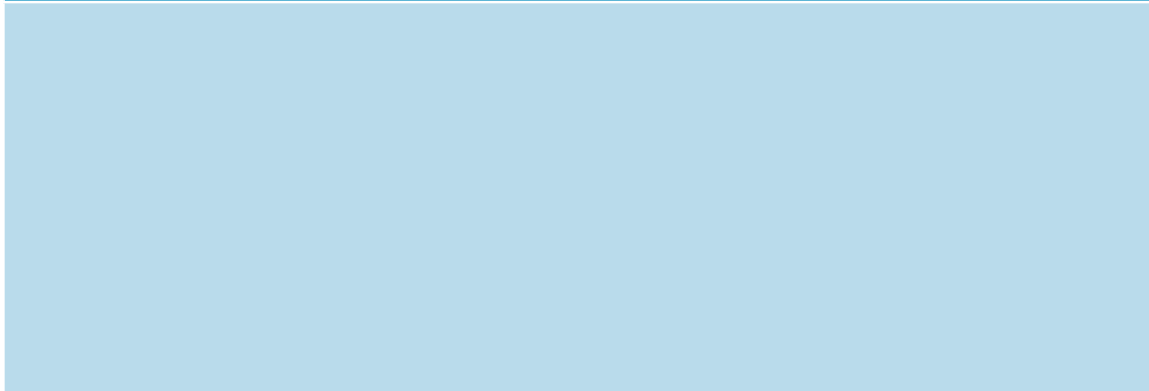
Sleep deprivation	My observations
Day one	
Day two	
Comparison	

#8 My risk tolerance

Hope and risk in balance

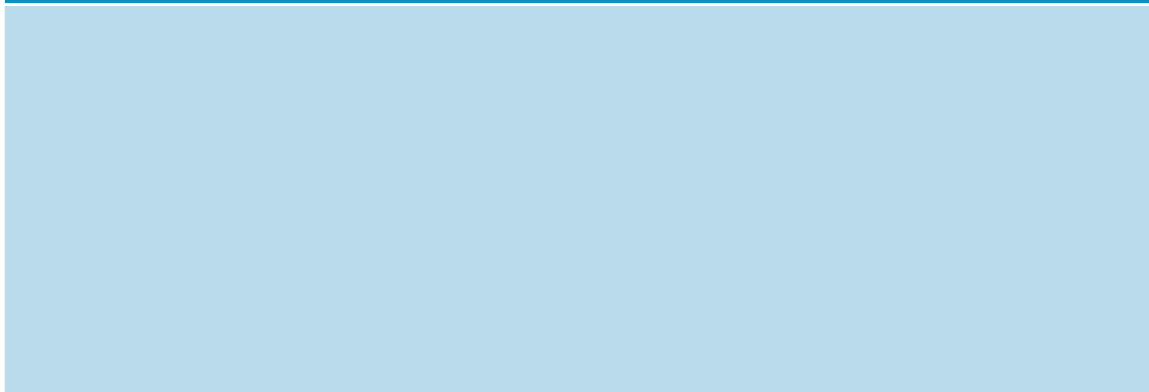
Are you a risk averse person or a risk taker? As you think about becoming a father, list what you think the risks (costs) would be. “Cost” is more than money. It includes what you will have to give up and the burden you assume.

Possible Costs



Now list what you think might be the potential rewards you might experience by becoming a father. These might be more difficult to determine because the unknowns might be greater.

Possible Rewards



Now reflect on these two lists. Then return to the course.

#9 Showing support

Demonstrating love when it matters the most

Make a list of inexpensive ways that you could support your partner to demonstrate your love.

Ways I can show my partner love



While you are doing this, ask your partner to make her own list on a separate paper of what you could do to show her support.

When you are done, sit down with the partner and discuss the two lists. Can you add anything else to your list? Ask her to prioritize your list from most to least important. Is money a big requirement for success? Even small things can be very important.

#10 Being together

Making an investment in each other

List up to ten activities that you did together that you found rewarding. Ask your partner to do the same from her point of view.

What I enjoyed	P	What she enjoyed	P

When the chart has been completed, examine each activity on both your lists. Given the time and effort required, select at least three from each list that you want to protect as new parents. Put a check mark in the “P” column for that activity.

#11 My job as a father

Making decisions about sharing the load

Make a list of at least five things that would fit on your job description for being a father. Ask your partner to independently decide on what she thinks those five descriptions would be for you without seeing what you have written.

My job description for being a father

My partner's job description for me being a father

Now compare your two lists. Discuss. Can you together reconcile your two job descriptions into one list?

#12 My moment of awe

Being open to wonder

Have you ever had an experience of profound awe, when you felt touched by something wonderful? It could have been a moment while you were listening to music, gazing at someone you love, or viewing a magnificent sunset or sunrise. When this happens there is a moment of peace, a feeling of life being just right. Describe that experience. Describe what happened, where you were, and who was present. Provide as much detail as you can.

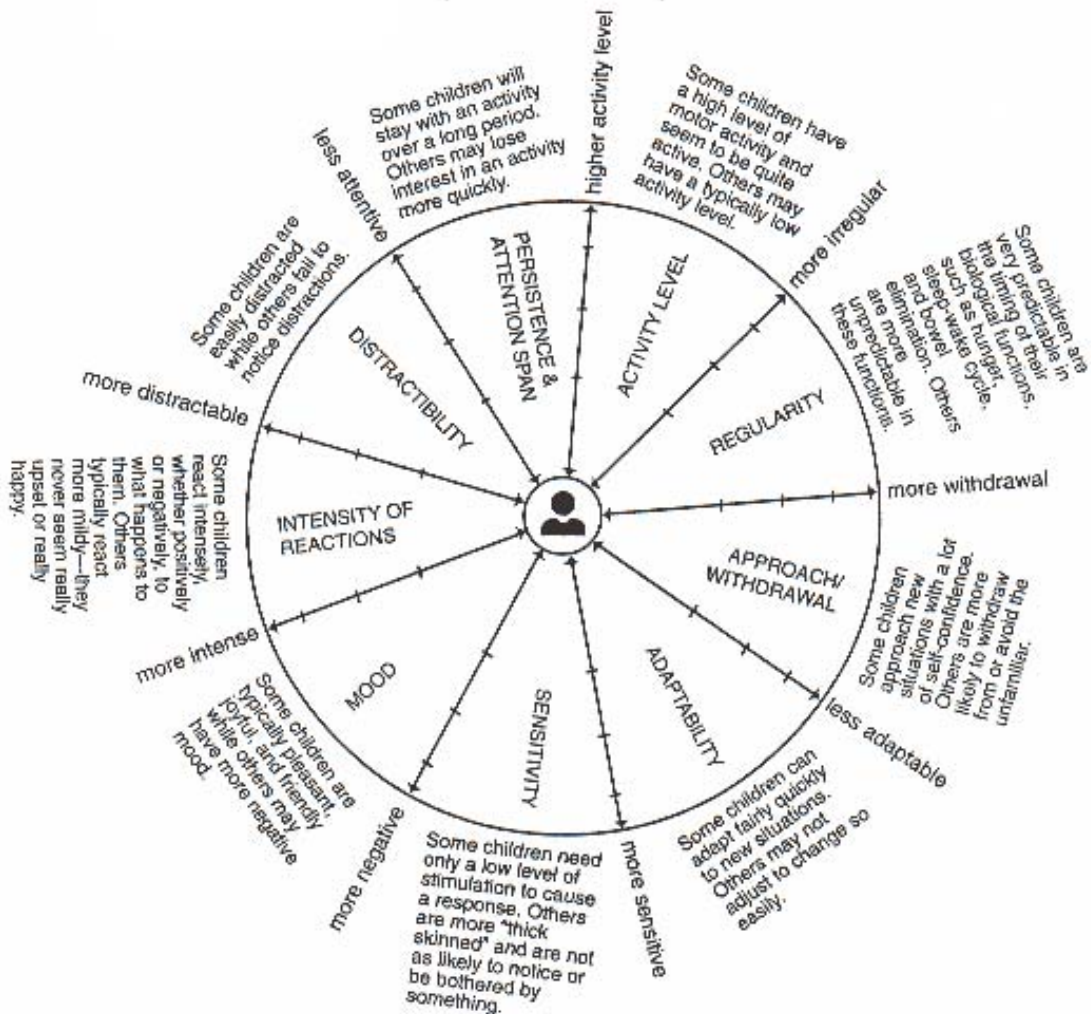
My experience of awe and wonder



#13 My temperament pic

Learning about myself

The temperament pic is a snapshot of your eight characteristics that were essentially present from the moment of your birth until now. Along each of the eight lines draw an “x” that you think is true for yourself along the range suggested by the characteristic. So if you think you have always been a high active person, put the “x” close to the top of the “higher activity level” line. Then draw a curving line from that point to the same exact point to the line on the right (in this case “more irregular.”) Fill in the slice with a pencil from that curved line to the center inner icon. The result then shows a slice of the pie for “Activity Level.” Each of these forms of temperament at all ranges are normal. But the bigger the slices on the pic, the greater the challenge you and your parents faced.



#14 Pulling it all together

The end and the beginning

We have arrived nearly at the end of the course. You have examined a considerable amount of information. Now is the time to sit back and begin evaluating what you have learned. List what you think are the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a father. Describe each in just a few key words.

Pros	Cons

Look at each item on both lists. Rank order them in significance. Be honest with yourself. Now if you had to give a weight to items on both lists is your decision clear? Evaluating pros and cons is difficult because you are forecasting an uncertain future. That uncertainty can be difficult to accept.

#15 Letter to the grown-up baby

Reaching out across time

Imagine for a moment that if you are not a father right now that you become one. Write a letter to your baby but as you write imagine him or her receiving the letter as a young adult (or older). Tell your child how you feel about being a father and what you think and feel about this new baby in your life. Reveal who you are, where you came from, what's important for you, and what you hope for the future for your child. You may or may not be someone remaining in this young adult's life, so use the letter to reach out across time to inform this young man or woman about the father in their lives.

Dear

Final comments

Reflecting on the experience

The first activity in this *Journal* asked states

As begin the course, what are you hoping to accomplish? Why take the time to read the material and complete the course? Imagine completing the course. How will you know the your experience here was worthwhile? What has to happen from now until then for you to consider the experience successful? Identify up to five outcomes you would like to achieve.

Take a look at what you wrote for what you wanted to accomplish. Did you achieve these goals and more? I hope so.

Thanks for downloading this *Journal* and taking the course.