



HOW TO...

care for families from birth to 3 months

Sikunye seeks to equip and support churches to care for families in the First Thousand Days (FTD). This reflection is part of a series of workshops hosted by Sikunye, discussing how to support families in the different stages of FTD.

Listen to audio recording [here](#)

Watch the video recording [here](#)

“Birth is a significant time in a parent’s life as a mother and a father are being born.”

Every birth is different: everything might go according to plan; it might be better than expected or it might be the hardest season mom and dad have experienced.

Moms and dads need people to journey with them through this unique season so they feel seen and cared for. We don't want them to feel isolated and alone. We want to positively affirm parents that they are enough, they can ask for help, that this is a hard time. There are people who are here for them.



the missing 4th trimester

The idea of the 4th trimester is that babies are born 3 months too early compared to other mammals who can run shortly after birth. Newborn babies require a lot of care and attention and are not able to smile, coo or turn over yet. It is in this newborn phase that babies still crave the constant soothing sensations and nourishment of the womb. Baby loves hearing mom's voice, the sound of her heartbeat, skin-to-skin contact and the smell of mom. Babies need so much and this is a very demanding time for moms. Moms can feel overwhelmed by the 24/7 care needed by baby.

This 4th trimester is a time of many firsts for mom, dad, and baby with a wide range of emotions.

It is an intense time of rapid change and growth from learning to feed to coping with lack of sleep. It is a time of baby blues, hormone changes and feeling overwhelmed and very tired. [Watch this video](#) to hear more of what is happening in this stage.

“Birth produces two people: the first, a flailing soul, struggling to take in a new world, a new way of being as it draws birth against the unknown. The second: a baby.”

Bunmi Laditan

key take aways from Julie Mentor of embrace*:

- **Focus on Mom 1st** – it is so easy to focus on the cute baby and ask about baby. Try to first ‘SEE’ mom and ask how she is doing. Remember dad too.
- **It can be hard for moms to ask for help** – find ways to reframe your offer to support like *“I am making you a meal this week, which day this week can I drop it off”* or *“I am available on Tuesday to babysit your older children, will the morning or afternoon work better?”* Give mom options of the type of help you can offer, like: childcare, washing dishes, praying for them. Note: this depends on your relationship with mom.
- **Set reminders to check-in with mom** – this will help you to remember as well as to be consistent and intentional in your support.
- **Set up a WhatsApp group** or a Moya Messenger** group for new moms to have community and to learn from one another. Try to create a safe space for moms to connect with each other.
- **Acknowledge that giving birth during a global pandemic like COVID19 is unique** and comes with a lot of disappointment, loss, fear and many struggles. Allow mom (and dad) to share experiences and disappointments. This will help them feel heard and seen. Respect their need to stay safe and follow COVID19 regulations.
- **Encourage mom to continue to attend her postnatal visits** – you can offer to assist with transport or to walk with mom if needed.
- **Encourage her to ask questions and to speak to her healthcare provider** if she is struggling or has any concerns.

Embrace*

‘Embrace is a national movement for connected, supported and celebrated motherhood. We want to see every new mother embraced and flourishing from the start of her motherhood journey, understanding that an empowered and embraced mother raises a thriving child’. <https://www.embrace.org.za/>

Moya messenger**

A #datafree platform this means NO DATA is taken from your airtime or data bundle balance. It is a good option for messaging mothers in your community. Android app: <https://moya.app/>

resources to care well for mom and dad

- [Sikunye's New Mom Devotional](#) and [My Parenting Journal](#)
- [The fourth trimester \(0-3months\)](#)
- [Positive affirmations and encouragements for mom or dad](#)
- [How can I help support and prepare mom and dad for pregnancy and birth?](#)
- [Breastfeeding Myth Busters](#)
- [Prepare home for baby](#)
- [How to register you baby's birth](#)