

# The Early Days

Sometimes, the best laid plans go awry, says this new dad.

BY DONALD FRASER

Almost every first-time expecting couple has a “birth plan,” an ideal version of just how things are going to proceed once labour hits. And no matter how much they are told to the contrary, these couples will go into their hospital (or home-birth) experience expecting to be the ones in control.

News flash: you are not in control.

Ours was going to be drug-free delivery, with plenty of coaching from a well-trained dad-to-be (me), followed up by a restful recuperation in our private room.

Instead, there was a request for epidural after 16 hours of very intense labour, a husband who was just barely hanging on by the end, and no private room available – meaning I was kicked out of our ward room at the crack of dawn.

“Donald!” cried the old friend I had just randomly run into on my way to the car. “Did you guys have the baby? Boy or girl? What’s the name?”

“Girl,” I said, blinking into the morning sunshine. “7lbs, 5 ounces. Her name is... is...” That was when my sleep-deprived brain conked out. I had no idea what my child’s name was despite the fact that it was me who had come up with it.

My friend stared at me with amazement as I fumbled with my phone to check the last text I had sent. “Clara!” I nearly shouted when I found it. “Clara Grace Campbell Fraser!”

I’ve got no memory of driving home after that.

We also had plans for the weeks and months after birth. We were going to exclusively breastfeed. I was going to wake up to bring the baby to bed for night feeds – you know, as a sign of solidarity and equality. We weren’t going to resort to a soother until Clara was several months old. We were only going to use cloth diapers. And we were going to work



on being healthy, so that we would have the energy to keep up with the demands of new parenting.

Well, we did breastfeed, but it was more of a challenge than either of us expected. There were, in fact, plenty of times we almost bailed and bought formula. We persisted, and Clara is a 100% breastfed child. But some of our other plans went awry.

We’ve spent countless money on disposable diapers, for instance – even though Clara is more often than not wearing cloth. As for me getting up in the night? It didn’t take long before both Krista and I realized that at least one of us needed sleep in order for our household to function.

And then there is the soother. I’m gazing down at Clara now and she is contentedly sucking away on it. It’s the only way she’ll relax. Oh, and I now have our favourite pizza joint on speed dial.

So, here’s the deal: It is important to plan. Your lives will be infinitely easier if you set out your goals and ambitions for birth and the weeks afterwards. But be prepared to throw that plan out the window when necessary.

In the end, you’ll find all that’s important is your baby. And the joy of her tiny presence will make you forget all about the plans that fell by the wayside.

It will be the happiest series of compromises that you’ll ever have to make.

*Donald Fraser writes for television, radio, and print publications. He’s also a new father. Which means he’s pretty much given up on sleep.*



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