

LIFE&TIMES FAMILY

Coping with motherhood

Two celebrity mothers talk to **Aneeta Sundararaj** on how they handle motherhood

ONE of the things that strikes me when I meet Dynas Mokhtar 29, for the first time is how relaxed she seems. Immediately at ease, it is necessary to keep in mind that she has had a busy life for someone so young and that she is now expecting her second baby.

When her first child, 2-year-old daughter Khyra Khalyssa, was born, she says: "It didn't really register that I was going to be a mother. Only when I held the baby, then I realised, 'OK, I'm a mum'."

Taking motherhood in her stride, Dynas says: "I didn't read any books like *How To Be A Perfect Mum*. I wanted to go with nature." After a pause, she adds: "I find it hard to describe what it was like when she was born. It was the most wonderful thing. And breast feeding the baby for the first time was wonderful."

Even though Dynas didn't make any preparations for this baby, her husband was clearly excited. "He is into cars and racing. He's the one who bought a stroller. What for? Some of them have such big tyres. My baby is not going to go rallying in the jungle. It's hell when I go out alone with the baby."

Instead of a stroller, Dynas uses a "sling ring". "Some people say, 'so Indon'. I don't care. Besides, there are some very stylish ones now: silk, linen, colour, printed, plain and even embroidered ones."

Elegant Belinda Chee is the exact opposite. This 29-year-old first time mother has always wanted a baby stroller. "I requested it as a gift at the full-moon party," says this TV host. Having once worked in a shop selling baby apparel she knew exactly what to look for. "It had to be lightweight and sturdy. I should be able to manage it with one hand. Many of the carriers now eight kilogrammes. Add the baby and you're carrying around at least 12kg. The one I have is no more than 10kg. It is manoeuvrable."

With a price tag of close to RM2,000 for her baby stroller, Chee adds: "Big tyres are not necessary. We rarely go for walks, but they must be decent-sized wheels."

As for motherhood, Chee seems to have had a tougher time since the birth of her 3-month-old daughter, Danielle Eng. "I worry even more than before. The most difficult part is sleep deprivation. There's no set schedule. Now, I have to follow a schedule set by someone else and that's scary. Worse, I worry a lot. Even about things that haven't happened. For example, I swaddle



Other than her family, Dynas has also garnered support from an online group



Chee's 'confinement lady' helped her with valuable advice

her in blankets before she sleeps. I read that by 4 to 5 months, you must stop doing this because it's not safe. Now, I worry about how I'm going to put her to sleep at night."

Both women followed some traditional customs after the delivery. Dynas stayed with her mother and says that: "I loved the pantang time. My mother is also a health freak. Those 44 days, everyone says the food is really boring. But my mother knows how to make food tasty.

She thinks she's not a good cook, but I think she is. She doesn't use ajinomoto or santan but the food is still delicious. She uses her own kelapa and she's into gardening. So, we have our own mini garden and nursery."

Without prompting, she adds: "I'm not worried about the weight issue. When you starve, milk production becomes less. I didn't think like, 'How many days do I have to diet to become thin?' The body

must rest. It will take care of itself. Besides, breast milk is good for the baby. They are awesome antibodies. I'm not one of those who worry about baby wipes and antibacterial and all. With breast milk, I know my baby will be fine."

Other than her family, Dynas has also garnered support from an online group called susuibu.com. "I know many mothers prefer to give formula because it's easier. When a woman can't breastfeed, she'll think 'Something must be wrong with me'. And many doctors don't know how to help her. Obstetricians will only tell you about delivery and the paediatrician will only deal with the baby. Susuibu.com is an online forum with a group of professional lactationists. They educate mothers on breastfeeding and advise you on things like lack of milk or inverted nipples."

Chee had a different kind of support: it was the "confinement lady" who taught her how to breastfeed.

Chee confides that she suffered from post-partum blues. "I wondered if everything I did was wrong. I remember people saying, 'When you look into your baby's eyes, you'll see the world'. I was just too tired."

From her mother, Dynas learnt the art of juggling her many roles as successful actress, TV host, model, wife and mother. She also launched DnA Boutique which specialises in maternity wear and breastfeeding clothes.

"My mother is a superwoman," says Chee. "She has a 'can do' attitude. If someone says she can't do something, she'll prove to them otherwise. So now, I say that if I can do motherhood, anyone can. I'm learning to take things a day at a time. My mother also led by example. She never ate snacks or drank sodas. So, I never craved them either. I am now very selective of what I eat."

Dynas encapsulates how important motherhood is to both of them when she says: "Yes, my career is affected now that I have a child. It's a sacrifice, but it's worth every minute."

Mum's the word

The Jacob's Ibuku Inspirasiku is a nationwide contest, which runs till April 30, to get Malaysians to tell their stories on how their mothers have inspired them to be healthy. For details, visit <https://www.facebook.com/JacobsMalaysia>

Shopping for strollers

YOUR baby is due soon and excited, you and your husband are out shopping for the expected new member of the family

The list of baby needs can be a long one — diapers, bottles, clothes, bedding, car seats...

One of the must-haves is a stroller. A friend once told me that buying a stroller can get as complicated and confusing as buying a new car. There are just too many choices out there. You can't just run into the store and grab the first one that comes into your view. But with so many strollers in the market, how do you begin to choose?

"Strollers have been used as a transport mechanism with wheels for babies and toddlers to get safely and comfortably from one point to another," says Ben Halsall, chief executive officer of Silver Cross Pacific.

Silver Cross is a well-known manufacturer and supplier of handcrafted prams, child car seats and buggies with accessories.

Halsall adds that a stroller is essentially a pushchair for small children. Most strollers can accommodate children from birth up to toddler (when they are able to walk).

It is often said that new parents tend to get confused between a pram and a stroller. When asked the difference between these two, Halsall explains that a pram is a pushchair where the child can face the parent pushing him.



Stylish in design yet practical —the Dazzle