

on a high note

Kelly Rowland always wanted a baby but, like most parents, didn't fully understand the changes one little person can bring. As she celebrates her son's first birthday, she talks frankly about the bumps and beauty of her initial year of motherhood.

by PATTY ADAMS MARTINEZ

IT'S 7 A.M. on a Sunday and it's hard to tell if Kelly Rowland is really tired or if she's just trying not to wake her son, Titan, because her usually strong voice is barely above a whisper. The busy mom has been filming episodes of Fox's *Empire* and hosting a new BET reality show set to air in April called *Chasing Destiny*, a search for the next big girl group. (Obviously Rowland knows a thing or two about that. Her group, Destiny's Child, sold more than 60 million albums and won three Grammys.) While her son has gone from crawling to walking to running, she's also been working on tracks for her next album.

It's thanks to Titan, Rowland says, that she has the "patience and confidence" to juggle it all. "I am much more laid-back now," she says. "Being a mom just makes me feel whole."

➔ An Intense Start

Back in 2014, Rowland was elated to be expecting a baby with her husband and manager, Tim Witherspoon. When Titan was born that November at 7.5 pounds, "there was so much love in the room," she says. Everything went according to her plan, with her doula and Witherspoon by her side. She even played a song she recorded called "Mommy's Little Baby" and, she says, the world stood still for her. "I was speechless," she remembers. "He took my breath away."


But tragically, only three short weeks later, Rowland's own mother, Doris, suffered a cardiac arrest and passed away. "It was a tough, emotional point for me," says Rowland. "I remember not wanting to be sad for Titan. I wanted to keep myself together because I believe

that all that stress and grief can be passed on to your baby. Knowing Titan needed me, and having that to focus on, helped me through."

➔ Finding Her Way

Grief aside, she had challenges to tackle—nursing being one of them. "I had my heart set on breastfeeding, but I wasn't producing enough milk. I got down on myself, which I think was mentally limiting my supply," says Rowland. She eventually supplemented with formula.

And then there was the universal new-parent struggle for sleep. "Even when the baby was sleeping, Tim and I weren't!" Rowland says. "That first week, Tim would poke at Titan to make sure he was breathing." Also, "I was lax with a sleep schedule in the beginning," she says. "But once I



Having Titan, "made me understand one of the reasons I'm here," Rowland says.

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read about how babies thrive on a schedule, we implemented one. Still, it took a while for him to get in the swing of it. Now Titan's asleep by 8:30 or 9 every night and he wakes up rested and happy."

Around the 4- or 5-month mark the family hit its stride. "That's when I started seeing Titan smile," she says, "and so I thought, 'We must be doing something right if he's happy!'" She remembers that first grin: "He was on the changing table and I was singing a silly song to him: 'Titan's so fly! Titan's so fly!' He just looked up at me and smiled and my heart melted."

➔ A New Outlook

"I was nervous that I didn't have the patience to be a good mom, because before Titan I had zero. But now I am very patient. The Bible verse 'love is patient' is real!" she says. She's also learned to let go. "I don't make the little things into big issues like I once did," she explains. "My OCD had to go out the window. My living room looks like a freaking day care!"

Motherhood has also allowed the perfectionist to give herself a break when it comes to weight. Her advice to other new moms: "Write on your mirror in lipstick: 'I had a baby. I'm a superhero.'" While it's hard, Rowland fits in spin classes and works out with a trainer. "People think of exercise as tiring, but it actually gives you energy." If the scale doesn't register much change, she advises new moms to be patient. "It takes about a year to get the weight off. Don't beat yourself up if it takes even longer."

This last year has also brought Rowland closer to the woman she's been known to call her sister, Beyoncé, whose daughter is just turning 4. "I'm closer with all of my girlfriends who are mothers," she says. "I call them all for advice."

At 14 months, Titan is a toddler, and Rowland is proud of how far both he and she have come. "I have always had maternal instincts, but as a mom you figure things out," she says. "Now I trust myself and feel stronger, like I can do anything." ❌

her first-year favorites

We asked Rowland to share a few things that have made the early months a bit more manageable.



"I love the Orbit Baby infant car-seat-and-stroller system. It's easy to use, and I feel like Titan is safe no matter where he is." \$1,020; orbitbaby.com



"I mostly shop for his clothes online. Baby Gap and Old Navy are my usual spots." Hoodie, \$40; striped bodysuit, \$13; moccasins, \$30; gap.com



"From the moment Titan was circumcised and home from the hospital, Aquaphor Healing Ointment became our best friend. It's still all around the house." \$17; drugstores



"Titan lets you know if he doesn't like a book! A favorite is Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle's *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* We read that one a lot." \$9; amazon.com