

“more than just the blues”

Do you work with a new mom with who is exhibiting feelings of

- Sadness most of the time
- Anger
- Guilt
- Nervousness
- Loneliness

When working with the new mom do you find that she

- Cries for no reason
- Feels panic
- Worries a lot about her health or the health of her baby
- Has trouble sleeping or relaxing
- Stays away from other people
- Has a change in appetite
- Has difficulty making decisions

If you have witnessed some of these signs, feelings, or behaviors, your new mom may be depressed.

Depression is common after pregnancy and birth, but can also happen during pregnancy. Women wonder how they could feel sad when they think they should be happy about being a mother. This can be a confusing time.

Depression can be treated. There is no need to suffer. There is help. Read the following; decide which best fits the signs, feelings and behaviors you have witnessed, then make the appropriate referral.

BABY BLUES

The baby blues are very common, starting suddenly in the third or fourth day after birth. About 50-80% of new mothers cry and feel overwhelmed, crabby, restless and anxious. Some women have lots of ups and downs, like a roller coaster. “Baby blues” are unpleasant but they usually go away on their own in less than two weeks. Advise mom to take good care of herself and to ask for and accept help from others.

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

About one in 10 new mothers feels depressed for more than a couple of weeks. Postpartum depression is a temporary illness that can be treated with therapy, medication and caring support. The depression may begin soon after birth or anytime in the year after delivery.

Women with postpartum depression may:

- Feel very tired
- Be unable to sleep when they want
- Feel that things are not right
- Feel helpless
- Cry
- Be confused about how they could feel this way with a new baby
- Think about harming themselves or their babies
- Have trouble taking care of their babies
- Not feel close to their babies
- Not be interested in having sex

POSTPARTUM PSYCHOSIS

This serious mental illness affects approximately 1 in 500-1000 new mothers. It usually begins within the first three months after delivery. Women may experience hallucinations, delusions, insomnia, agitation, and bizarre feelings and behavior. Postpartum psychosis is a medical emergency. Women need immediate medical assistance.

What to do to help with “more than just the blues”?

Advise your new mom to contact her primary care or OB/GYN provider if the blues last more than two weeks. Some of these feelings can be caused by physical conditions.

Advise your new mom that the health care provider may suggest that help is needed from a professional in the mental health field. If this is the case this resource guide can be of assistance in locating a mental health professional who can best meet your new mom's needs.

In addition to getting professional help, the following are tips you can offer that may help:

- Be kind to yourself - eat right, sleep, rest when the baby naps, and exercise.
- Ask for and accept help from others.
- Express your feelings, both positive and negative. It is OK to cry.
- Talk to a supportive person.
- Do something “just for you” every day.
- Take a break from the baby. Let someone else care for the baby for a while.
- Set realistic expectations. Baby care takes a lot of time.
- Plan your day to get a feeling of control over your life.
- Look for humor. Have fun and a good laugh.
- Try not to make any major life changes until you are used to your new life.

Choosing An Appropriate Therapist

Finding an appropriate therapist is every bit as important as recognizing the need for therapy. We all have days when the stress in our lives seems overwhelming. Often, this can be alleviated by talking to a friend or engaging in a pleasurable activity. If feelings of depression or anxiety persist, or if dysfunctional behaviors continue, it may be time to think about professional assistance. Consumers should consult with their primary care physician/OBGYN or other health care provider to assure that there are no medical problems contributing to these difficulties.

The client/therapist relationship is one of the most intimate relationships that will ever be established. It is important that the choice of therapist is a well-informed one. Please take the following into consideration when helping consumers seek assistance.

Credentials

While most specialties require four years of college plus additional graduate work, certain terms such as “therapist” and “counselor” are unregulated and may be used by anyone, irrespective of education or experience. All of the therapists listed in this directory have had advanced education and have state or professional credentials.

Interpersonal Style

It is important to feel comfortable with the therapist's style and approach to treatment. While a trusting relationship takes time to develop, it is perfectly okay to interview therapists over the telephone in advance of selecting.

Type of Therapy

There are numerous kinds of therapy, sometimes used in combination, which are selected based on the orientation and background of the therapist and the client's needs. Medications may be recommended to help stabilize or reduce symptoms. The therapist will most likely also use a form of psychotherapy to assist in understanding what is occurring and how best to cope with it.

Insurance Coverage and Fees

Private practitioners may accept only limited types of insurance. It is important to check with the therapist and the health insurance carrier, if it is important that some of the costs associated with therapy be reimbursed. Some insurance carriers may require a consultation with the primary care physician/OBGYN to obtain a referral before receiving mental health services.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

A psychologist is a health care professional who diagnoses and treats mental, emotional and behavioral disorders and ailments. They have been trained in the science of human behavior and personality and are licensed to do psychological testing and therapy.

In New York, psychologists have earned a doctoral degree in psychology from a program registered or accepted as equivalent by the New York State Education Department. Psychologists with doctoral degrees with the letters Ph.D., Psy.D. and Ed.D. all have met the same educational requirements.

In addition, New York psychologists have completed two years of supervised experience, including one year after the doctoral degree. They have also passed a national licensing exam.

SOCIAL WORKERS and OTHER COUNSELING PROFESSIONALS

Social workers help individuals, families and groups change behaviors, emotions, attitudes, relationships, and social conditions to restore and enhance their capacity to meet their personal and social needs. Social workers deal with a wide variety of long and short-term mental, emotional and behavioral conditions.

There are a number of credentials listed among these individuals.

ACSW - Academy of Certified Social Workers

An ACSW provides certification of competence for self-regulated practice by individual social workers. The criteria for ACSW membership is to hold regular membership in the National Association of Social Workers; hold a master's degree from a graduate school of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education; have accumulated at least two full time years or 3,000 hours of post-MSW social work experience in an agency or organizational setting under the supervision of a masters-level social worker; submit two professional references; complete a written application and fee payment and have successfully completed the ACSW written examination.

BCD - Board Certified Diplomate in Clinical Social Work

The BCD credential is issued by the American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work to those who have achieved high levels of clinical education, training and experience. To become a BCD clinician, a social worker must have five years or 7,500 hours of direct

clinical practice (3,000 hours under supervision); a master's degree in social work from a program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education; the highest license or certification in the jurisdiction(s) in which the clinician practices and successful completion of a peer-evaluation-based examination process. Board Certified Diplomates are re-certified annually on the basis of maintenance of licensure, a minimum of 20 hours of continuing clinical education, and currency of direct practice.

CSW - Certified Social Worker

Only a licensed social work professional may legally use the title Certified Social Worker. To become a CSW, a person must have earned a Master's in Social Work degree from a graduate school of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education; typical programs equal two years of graduate course work, including supervised internships. In addition, a certified social worker has passed a national licensing exam.

CSW - R

The R indicates that the social worker has had six years of supervised psychotherapy services following receipt of the MSW and is entitled to reimbursement of fees for professional services under the New York State Insurance Law. You will need to check with the social worker to determine which insurance plans they have coverage through and if prior approval is required.

CASAC - Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor

This credential is issued by the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse. The CASAC was established to ensure that counselors who provide direct care in alcohol and substance abuse programs are competent in their work and skilled in meeting the needs of today's clients. To become a CASAC, a person must meet specific competency and ethical conduct requirements; meet specific work requirements; meet minimum education and training requirements; pass both written and oral examinations; and prepare an acceptable written case presentation. A CASAC certificate is valid for a period of two years.

AASECT - American Association of Sex Educators Counselors and Therapists

An AASECT certified sex therapist is a mental health professional trained to provide in-depth psychotherapy, who has specialized in treating clients with sexual issues and concerns. They are either licensed, or in the absence of available licensure, certified, registered, or clinical members of a national psychotherapy organization.

ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES

An Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) is a registered nurse with additional education, skills and experience in a health care specialty area. Education is usually obtained within a master's degree program. Varying levels of certification and licensure can be achieved through state or national entities, and through health care specialty organizations. Advanced practice nurses are usually in one of the following categories:

CNS - Clinical Nurse Specialist

A CNS is an expert in a specialized area of clinical practice, and is qualified to handle a wide range of physical and mental health problems.

NP - Nurse Practitioner

A Nurse Practitioner also provides health care services, including physical examinations, treatment of illness, interpretation of diagnostic tests and prescribing of medications. Nurse Practitioners specialize in areas such as psychiatry, women's health, pediatrics, or other areas.

Nurses Credentials Listed:

BC – Board Certified; a National certification.

NPP – Nurse Practitioner in Psychiatry, a State certification.

CGP – Certified Group Psychotherapist.

PSYCHIATRISTS

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses. Following medical school, a psychiatrist completes a four-year residency training in the field of psychiatry.

As a medical doctor, a psychiatrist is able to prescribe medications if they are needed. Therapists with other professional credentials often have psychiatrist backup so that they can refer for medications if they are needed. A therapist may also suggest that a client discuss medications with her current MD.

Web Sites

Postpartum Resource Center of New York
www.postpartumNY.org

Postpartum Resource Center of New York is a non-profit organization offering emotional support, educational pamphlets and support group referrals.

Postpartum Support International
<http://www.iup.edu/an/postpartum>

Postpartum Support International is maintained by The Indiana University of Pennsylvania.. It offers information intended to increase knowledge on postpartum issues. It also offers a bookstore and a member page.

Depression After Delivery
<http://www.depressionafterdelivery>

Depression After Delivery is a national nonprofit organization, which provides support for women with ante and postpartum depression. Its focus includes education, information, support groups, telephone support and referrals for women and families coping with mental health issues associated with childbearing, both during pregnancy and postpartum.

Med Ed PPD
<http://www.mededppd.org>

MedEdPPD.org is a web site developed with the support of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to provide education about postpartum depression (PPD). It has a section designed to foster the education of primary care providers (pediatricians, family physicians, obstetricians, psychiatrists, nurses, physician's assistants, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, social workers) who treat women who have or are at risk for postpartum depression (PPD). There is also a section for Mothers and Others that provide education about postpartum depression as well as information for women with PPD and their friends and families.

Books

*Postpartum Survival Guide: “It wasn't supposed to be like this...”
(1994) by Anne Dunnewold, Ph.D. and Diane Sanford, Ph.D.
Published by New Harbinger Publications.

*This Isn't What I Expected: Recognizing and Recovering from Depression and Anxiety after Childbirth. (1994) by Karen Kleinman, MSW, and Valerie Raskin, MD. Published by Bantam Books.

*Shouldn't I Be Happy: Emotional Problems of Pregnant and Postpartum Women.
(1995) by Shailia Misri, MD.
Published by Simon & Schuster.

The Postpartum Husband
(2000) by Karen Kleinman. Published by Xlebris Press. Explains how to understand and support a partner with postpartum mood disorder.

Sleepless Days
(2000) by Susan Kushner Resnick. Published by St. Martin's Press. Discusses personal experience of PPD.

Overcoming PPD & Anxiety
(1998) by Linda Sebastian. Published by Addicus Books. A guide to understanding symptoms of (and treatment for) anxiety disorders that can occur after childbirth.

*Also includes chapters for husbands and partners.