

Case Example



Shari, her husband and their two children aged 2 years and 10 weeks live in a rural community. Shari, who has no past history of mental illness, was diagnosed with severe postpartum depression. She is being supported by the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program of her local public health unit. Shari is on medication. She spends a good part of her day sleeping or resting. She has a few hours in the afternoon when she has a bit more energy and gets up for a while. Her house was in disarray until her mother arrived. She has not cooked a meal for weeks. She has let the 2 year old watch TV and has not been outside alone or with the children for over a month. She worries about not feeling instant love for her baby and that her illness will hurt her children. When either of the children cry, she feels like running away. Usually, she lets her mother settle both the 2 year old and the newborn. Her mother has moved in for an indefinite period to help the family. Shari's husband has resumed work after a 4-week leave.

Worksheet with Questions for Reflection

1. How would you respond to Shari's worries that her illness will "hurt her children"?

2. Though Shari spends much of the day sleeping or resting, is there opportunity for learning about her strengths as a parent? Or strengths of other adult family members in care-giving for the children?

3. What might you observe in this situation that can help to nurture the infant and older child? Given Shari's current state of health, what are some small steps that might be possible?

4. What signs of stability for the children might you observe during your visits?

5. Shari expresses significant worry about not feeling bonded with her infant – how might you respond to her comments? What ideas and strategies might aid Shari in engagement with her children and promoting the development of a secure attachment?

6. Using the reflective questions 1 to 5, review and discuss a current case in your group.

7. Think of some statements you have made to comment on a parent's strength. What did you say? What seemed to help the parent?

8. Take a look at the "Strengths of Vulnerable Families" handout. Which strengths did you notice when you were working with a client? Which strengths come to your mind now?

9. Using the NURSE strategies from the handout "Taking Care of Yourself", what activities can you encourage to promote your client's self-care?

10. Which self-care strategies have you found effective with clients?

Taking Care of Yourself

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health

For more information go to: www.toronto.ca/health/pregnancy/depression/selfcare.htm

These self-care measures may not be enough to treat your depression. You may need counselling and/or medication to get better. For more information on services available in your community, speak to your doctor or nurse.

When you experience depression and anxiety, it affects how you feel, your thoughts, what you say and do as well as your relationships with others. Taking care of yourself and your baby can be difficult.

The following N.U.R.S.E program is a way of helping you feel better.

Nourishment

Food nourishes your body and provides important nutrients for a healthy mind and body. Healthy eating can lower the risk of depression and provide the energy your body and brain needs to care for yourself and your baby. “Eat well one small step at a time” (www.toronto.ca/health/pregnancy/depression/eat_well.htm) can guide you to eat the right foods for your emotional health.

Understanding

Postpartum Depression (PPD) is the most common medical problem related to having a baby. Understanding yourself and PPD can increase your ability to care for yourself and others. When left untreated, PPD can have serious negative effects on you and your baby.

It is important for you and your family, such as your partner, parents and other family members to be aware of the signs of depression and anxiety after birth and other mood disorders.

Rest and Relaxation

Caring for a baby may result in lack of sleep. Stress, anxiety and depression may also disrupt sleep which can lead to even more anxiety and depression. Rest is important for your emotional health and getting a good night's sleep (6 hours in a 24 hour period) is a priority. Make time every day to relax.



Support and Spirituality

Getting support during stressful times can help prevent PPD or can help you to cope with depression. Support can come from your family, friends, peers, community members and organizations. Don't be afraid to ask for and accept help. Examples of support include:

- help with cleaning and cooking
- talking with your partner or a family member
- attending a mom-to-mom support group
- seeing a therapist or counsellor
- talking with a public health nurse

Spirituality can be any experiences that provide comfort and joy. Spiritual activities may include:

- listening to music
- keeping a journal
- reading
- massage
- warm bath
- deep breathing
- meditation
- belonging to a religious organization

Exercise

Physical activity can make you feel better both physically and emotionally. It may feel like you have no time or energy to be physically active but regular physical activity can help with depression and anxiety. It is also a way of getting out of the house and meeting other people. Check with your local public health unit or your community guide to find fun and easy ways to include physical activities or if there is a group or program you can join.



Strengths of Vulnerable Families

How Women Master the Art of Resilience Adapted from *Dancing Backwards in High Heels: Women and Resilience* (Patricia O’Gorman, Ph.D., 1994)

Strengths

Individual

1. Healthy
2. Pride in appearance
3. Pride in ability to do things
4. Ability to bring new people into his life
5. Ability to have friends
6. Ability to speak to peers
7. Ability to have a relationship with adults
8. Ability to speak to adults
9. Ability to separate from negative peers
10. Ability to separate from negative adults
11. Ability to positively connect with peers
12. Ability to positively connect with adults
13. Empathy
14. Sensitivity
15. Compassion
16. Ability to volunteer to serve others
17. Desire to serve others
18. Ability to understand the impact of actions on others
19. Desire to understand the impact of actions on others
20. Sense of Humor
21. Curiosity
22. Ability to play
23. Creativity
24. Leadership Potential
25. Leadership
26. Insight
27. Knowing that there is a problem
28. Knowing that another has a problem
29. Intuition
30. Ability to understand
31. Ability to read people
32. Desire to understand others/rules
33. Desire for Independence
34. Ability to respond follow directions
35. Ability to set boundaries
36. Desire to set boundaries
37. Ability to leave dangerous situations
38. Initiative/positive actions
39. Ability to explore
40. Ability to make transitions
41. Positive past work history
42. Entrepreneurial/interested in own business
43. Motivation to learn about the world or work
44. Ability to generate school work
45. Comfort in making mistakes in pursuit of a goal
46. Ingenuity/Inventiveness
47. Ability to set goals
48. Ability to follow-through on goals
49. Ability to follow direction
50. High level of self-motivation
51. Ability to engage in cooperative/ competitive recreational pursuits

52. Ability to be a team member
 53. Desire to be a team member
 54. High level of moral development
 55. Age appropriate level of moral development
 56. Ability to judge right from wrong
 57. Ability to know his/her values
 58. Ability to explore his/her values
 59. Strong spiritual base
 60. Ability to state his/her needs
 61. Ability to know to feelings
 62. Ability to express feelings
 63. Desire to express feelings
 64. Ability to confront issues honestly
 65. Honesty
 66. Assertiveness when speaking
 67. Assertiveness utilizing his physical presence
 68. Ability to accept constructive criticism
 69. Ability to accept limits
 70. Desire to accept limits
 71. Ability to work within limits
 72. Hope
 73. Membership in an organized religion
- Family/caregiver**
74. Love of their children
 75. Loyalty to their family/caregiver
 76. Commitment to their children
 77. Desire to remain as a family/caregiver unit
 78. Cohesiveness
 79. Ability to make a home
 80. Ability to structure home –
Having household rules
 81. Ability to set rules and boundaries
 82. Ability to enforce rules
 83. Decision making skills
 84. Connection to an extended family/
caregiver
 85. Established family/caregiver traditions
 86. Membership in a faith community
 87. Ability to monitor their children’s activities
 88. Communication skills
 89. Ability to see the good in their children
 90. Warmth
 91. Have recreational pursuits and interests
 92. Ability to advocate for their children
 93. Ability to motivate their children

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Resources and References Handout

RESOURCES

For Parents

- *Reaching In Reaching Out, Promoting Resilience in Young Children*: www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-parents.htm. A site created to support anyone involved in caring for young children. The site contains much information about Inner Strengths and Outside Supports. Also see: Skills Videos introducing resiliency skills: www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-skillsvideo.htm
- *Parenting Well*: A website with information on mental illness and parenting: www.parentingwell.org.
 - Strengths & Goals Checklist – interactive
 - Taking Care of Yourself
 - Links to other resources
- *Caring For Kids*: Information for Parents from the Canadian Paediatric Society. See: Behaviour & Parenting: Attachment, A Connection for Life. www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/attachment.
- *Prenatal and Postpartum Depression and Anxiety – Steps to Wellness* from Toronto Public Health www.toronto.ca/health/pregnancy/depression/index.htm.

For Service Providers

- *Early Childhood Mental Health Treatment, Training Reference Guide*. Children's Mental Health Ontario, summer 2002: pp.100-107 Engaging Hard to Reach Families
- *Reaching In Reaching Out*: www.reachinginreachingout.com/. A Canadian, evidence-based program for teaching resilient thinking and coping skills to young children.
- *Promoting Maternal Mental Health During Pregnancy: Theory, Practice and Intervention*. Solchany, J.E., 2001. NCAST Programs, University of Washington

Best Start Resource Centre

- *On Track, Section 6: Supporting Parents and Professionals*. www.beststart.org/OnTrack_english. A guide to child development from 0 – 6 years for service providers
- *My Child and I: an Attachment for Life*. A booklet that helps parent understanding attachment and provides easy and fun activities that promote attachment for all ages from 0 – 3. Available in several languages. www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/index.html
- *Baby Wants*. A booklet that introduces parents to cues how babies express their needs, wants and feelings. Available in several languages. www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/index.html
- *Healthy Baby Healthy Brain*. A website that tells parents about their child's brain development and how to promote healthy brain development through examples. www.healthybabyhealthybrain.ca
- *Building Resiliency in Young Children*. Booklet for parents of children from birth to age 6. http://beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/index.html.