

Facilitator:

Suggested Pre-Workshop Preparation:

Provide handout prior to workshop or at least the list of resources at the end of the handout.

Have participants

1. Review one or more modules in CAMH Mental Health & Addiction 101 (in the list of Resources); be prepared to share insights gained and how this might help them in their work role.
2. Review one or two items on the list of Resource in detail; be prepared to discuss how they would be helpful.

When Mental Illness Becomes Part of the Family

“In 2004 my family suffered tremendously at the hands of my depression and anxiety disorder. It consumed our life. Thankfully we were surrounded for the most part by caring, accepting and giving human beings... Imagine feeling that you are in a deep dark pit, and the dirt is falling down around you.... You can't stop crying as you fear you are lost forever and no one will find you. Isolated with no hope you feel that there is no way out. THAT is a very short synopsis of what I experienced and felt like.”

Comment from a parent affected by mental health challenges

Module 1: Experiencing Mental Health Challenges While Parenting

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The impact of having a significant mental health problem as a parent is movingly described in a recent newspaper article on mental illness and the family, and captured in this excerpt from a comment posted by a reader:

Simplee Serene. [Simplee Serene. Comment on *State Of Mind Part 2: Collateral Damage. When Mental Illness Becomes Part Of The Family*. By André Picard. The Globe and Mail. posted 8:48 PM on January 23, 2012. See Resources.]

Facilitator discuss the comment

Service Provider Survey Themes

- Not knowing enough about mental illness, in particular concurrent disorders.
- Feeling overwhelmed by needs of parents and children.
- Experiencing frustration with clients who are reluctant to access or follow-up with treatment.
- Lack of resources for mental health referrals.
- Difficulty in communicating with other health care providers.

In a recent survey of staff of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program in Ontario, all respondents reported having clients who experience some type of mental health challenge – be it related to pregnancy, postpartum, or not related to the peripartum period.

Respondents noted several themes including:

- Not knowing enough about mental illness, in particular concurrent disorders
- Feeling overwhelmed by needs of parents and children
- Experiencing frustration with clients who are reluctant to access, accept or follow-up with treatment
- Lack of resources for mental health referrals
- Difficulty in communicating with other health care providers

Most survey participants expressed a need to increase their knowledge and skills in order to support their practice.

Module Goals

Education about mental health challenges to assist service providers in:

- Understanding and mitigating the impact on families
- Facilitating professional help and a circle of support.
- Caring for oneself in a compassionate role

Module Content

- Education for Service Providers
- Mitigating the Impact of Mental Health Challenges on the Family
- Understanding the Healing Relationship
- Facilitating Professional Help
- Helping to Create a Circle of Support for Families
- Caring for Oneself in a Compassionate Role

This Module Is Organized as Follows:

- Education for Service Providers
- Mitigating the Impact of Mental Health Challenges on the Family
- Understanding the Helping Relationship
- Facilitating Professional Help
- Helping to Create a Circle of Support for Families
- Caring for Oneself in a Compassionate Role
- Resources

Facilitator provide handout.

Handout includes:

- Case Example
- Worksheet with Questions for Reflection
- Best Start Resource Centre *Circle of Support*
- *People Matter* handouts
 - *For service providers: What To Do To Help A New Mom*
 - *For spouses/partners: Ten Things Not To Say To A New Mom*
 - *For Moms of New Moms: What New Moms Need From Their Moms*
- Resources and References

Mental Health Challenges

- Postpartum depression or anxiety
- Prenatal depression or anxiety
- Other mental health disorders or symptoms occurring during the perinatal period or while parenting young children
- Chronic or acute mental illness
- Symptoms of a mental health challenge while experiencing a concurrent mental illness

For the purpose of these modules we have used the term “mental health challenges”.

These can include:

- Postpartum depression or anxiety
- Prenatal depression or anxiety
- Other mental health disorders or symptoms occurring during the perinatal period (conception to one year after the infant’s birth) or while parenting young children (e.g., bipolar depression diagnoses following a postpartum psychosis)
- Chronic or acute mental illness (e.g., unipolar depression)
- Symptoms of a mental health challenge while experiencing a concurrent mental illness
- (e.g., symptoms of postpartum depression in a client with a diagnosis of schizophrenia)

Facilitator discuss what this means and what participants have experienced with clients if not already discussed in the introduction.

Education for Service Providers

- Each year, up to 1 in 10 Canadians, 25 – 44 years old, suffer from anxiety, depression, or substance use.
- 20% of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime.
- Occurrence of anxiety and/or depression during prenatal and postpartum periods for mothers and fathers can be higher than in the general population (about to 1 in 5).

Each year, up to 1 in 10 Canadians in their prime parenting years, 25 to 44 years old, suffers from anxiety, depression, or substance use (Tiwari et al 2006).

20% of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime (CAMH, <http://www.cmha.ca/media/fast-facts-about-mental-illness/#.UET2sCJqOF8>).

The occurrence of mental health challenges, in particular depression and/or anxiety in the prenatal and postpartum period in mothers and also in fathers can be even higher (about 1 in 5) than in the general population (Grigoriadis et al 2011; Paulson & Bazemore 2010).

A service provider working with families will frequently encounter individuals with mental health problems and/or substance use that are sometimes severe. This module will help you become more familiar with an array of mental health challenges. Module 2 will address intrusive thoughts, harm ideation and crisis situations.

Education for Service Providers

- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) – Mental Health and Addiction 101
 - 16 self-directed tutorials including:
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Bipolar Disorder
 - Personality Disorders
 - Addictions
 - Psychoses & Schizophrenia

To learn more about mental health challenges, review one or more tutorials of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [CAMH], Mental Health and Addiction 101. The 16 tutorials provide a brief overview of mental illness types including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, addictions, as well as more severe mental illness such as psychosis or schizophrenia. Several modules cover addiction and concurrent disorders (having a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder). The modules also provide insights on stigma, diversity and health equity, and stages of change. These latter three modules can add valuable insights into why some individuals do not seek help for mental health problems even as they struggle to maintain a home and care for their family.

Facilitator have participants share insights gained from the pre-workshop tutorials.

Case Example



“Tami” is a married mother of a three year-old. She seems really anxious when you first meet her; she smiles nervously, and fiddles with her fingers frequently as you chat. She lets on that she was really nervous about your visit today; that she has always

been shy and a “worry wart” since she was little. She also tells you that she has had a history of anxiety. You sense that she is sensitive to criticism. When asked, she relays symptoms that sound like anxiety attacks, and she has much more worry than usual about something awful happening to her child.

Facilitator discuss *Case Example*:

Question for Reflection (1 - 3):

What has your experience been with clients who are noticeably anxious or depressed?

How do you facilitate conversation with anxious clients?

What is your experience with clients who are having intrusive thoughts? (This will be discussed in more detail in module 2).

Impact of Parent's Mental Health Challenge on The Family

Feeling:

- Overwhelmed
- Frightened
- Isolated
- Confused

Challenged by:

- How and where to find help
- Lack of compassion
- Long wait times
- Stigma and discrimination
- Disruption of household and family routines

A parent who is struggling with depression, anxiety, or other mental health challenges, can feel:

- Overwhelmed
- Frightened
- Isolated
- Confused

They are often challenged by how and where to find help, lack of compassion, long wait times, stigma, discrimination, and experience a disruption of household and family routines.

Many affected individuals will hide their problems and often avoid seeking help in dealing with them [Mental Health Commission of Canada]. Mental health challenges in a parent affect the entire family, and often change relationships within the family or cause considerable relationship stress. Many families experience disruption of normal routines.

Understanding The Healing Relationship

- Service providers are important supports
- Opportunity for discussing health and family concerns
- Empathic listening can reduce a client's reluctance to share concerns

Providing time and opportunity for non-judgmental discussion of parent(s) health and family concerns is in itself therapeutic. CAMH notes that service providers working in the substance use and mental health fields, family, friends, neighbours, and other community supports, “are the single most important component in helping people recover from mental health problems and substance use” [CAMH: Diversity and Health Equity module]. Offering empathic listening and support can reduce a client’s reluctance to share concerns about their mental health.

Key Messages for a Healing Relationship

- Go slow
- Remain non-judgmental
- Ask for permission about asking questions and providing information
- Offer hope
- Provide access to information and support
- Include clients and their families/supports in decision making

Module 4 contains more detailed information about how a service provider can support (behavioural) change.

Some Reasons for Not Seeking Professional Help

- Struggle with their experience and not acknowledge they need help.
- Find speaking about mental health not acceptable within their family or culture.
- Fear being judged a bad parent.
- Fear that child protection services may take their children from them.
- Be afraid they may fall apart and never recover.
- Be too sick to ask for help.
- Think there are no services available.
- Not speak or understand English or French.

Module 1: Experiencing Mental Health Challenges While Parenting

Some individuals are reluctant to seek professional help for their mental health challenges. High levels of depression, anxiety, or irritability can impair an individual's ability to engage with service providers, follow their guidance or make decisions.

Facilitator discuss the barriers mentioned and any others participants' clients may have experienced.

Facilitating Professional Help

–E.g.: “Would you like to hear about some possible next steps?”

Question for reflection:

What could those steps look like?

As noted above, individuals may be hesitant to seek help – even from their own family physician. Ask for her/his permission to proceed with discussion about how you as a professional might help, e.g., “Would you like to hear about some possible next steps?”

Facilitator discuss *Question for Reflection (4 and 5):*

How can you help a client seek professional help?

How do you raise the idea of seeking advise or care?

If the client is willing, some options could include:

- Offer to speak to their health care provider first (with consent).
- Offer to send a note to their healthcare provider with, for example, a completed EPDS.
- Offer to help her book an appointment with her healthcare provider.
- Offer to accompany her to an appointment.
- Discuss options for additional professional help.

For example, “Would you like me to send a brief note to your family physician about how you are feeling?”.

When dealing with a difficult situation, it may be helpful to call a helpline or service agency to inquire about next steps, especially if the parent has no access to a local healthcare provider or clinic. If a parent is already receiving mental health care, consider asking the client for **consent** to communicate with the other care providers.

Key Messages for Facilitating Professional Help

- Create a safe environment for discussion
- Communicate with respect
- Offer hope for recovery
- Provide access to information and support
- Include clients and their families/supports in decision making

Facilitator use *People Matter* pages from handout

They provide specific tips

- 1) *For service providers: What To Do To Help A New Mom,*
- 2) *For spouses/partners: Ten Things Not To Say To A New Mom,*
- 3) *For Moms of New Moms: What New Moms Need From Their Moms.*

Question for Reflection (6):

The messages in the handouts were obtained directly from mothers with PPD. How can the messages be reframed in a more positive way?

Helping to Create a Circle of Support for Families

- Practical help
- Information for the client and the family
- Social and emotional support
- Professional support

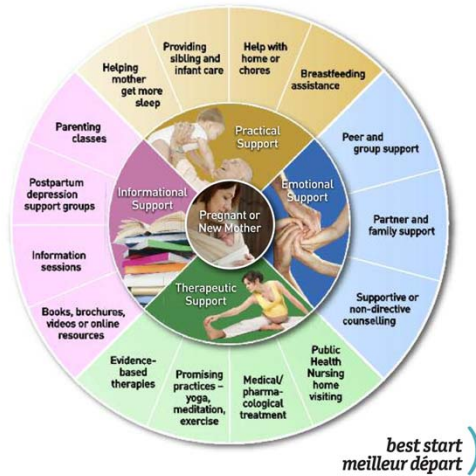
A health or service provider can discuss how the client and family can pull together the supports they need. Some tips for discussion can include:

- Acceptance of one's illness and the need for respite from usual daily tasks or roles.
- Acknowledge the client's limits in energy and ability to do usual activities; what would she like a break from?
- Importance of the partner/family to understand and support the respite and any other supportive plans.

The family may need support in one or more of these areas:

- Practical help.
- Information for the family about coping with mental health problems and how to support recovery.
- Social and emotional support.
- Professional and therapeutic support.

Creating a Circle of Support



Module 1: Experiencing Mental Health Challenges While Parenting

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For additional information and some specific examples, see Part Two in The Best Start Resource Centre handbook: *Creating Circles of Support for Pregnant Women and New Parents* [See: Other Resources – Service Providers].

Facilitator use *Creating a Circle of Support* from handout.

Question for Reflection (7):

How can you use the circle of support with a client?

Care of Oneself in a Compassionate Role

- Organizational supports
 - Program
 - Supervisor
 - Peers
- Apply self-care strategies
 - Eat well
 - Stay active
 - Do things you enjoy
 - Take time for yourself
 - Connect with others and build relationships

Module 1: Experiencing Mental Health Challenges While Parenting

Service providers working closely with families who are experiencing mental health challenges can find it stressful and overwhelming. It is important for service providers to take care of themselves and seek support so they can continue to provide care in a compassionate and empathic manner. Some strategies for service providers to seek support and prevent burnout include:

- Use organizational supports through program (such as EAP), supervisors (discussions, debriefing, requests for a change in assignment, work hours, resources, supports), or peers (social time, normalizing, discussions etc.).
- Apply self-care strategies: eat well, stay active, do things you enjoy, take time for yourself, and connect with others and build relationships.
- Review resources that are designed to prevent or address burnout or vicarious trauma.

Facilitator use *Questions for Reflection (8 and 9)*

- *What professional supports and personal care strategies do you use in your current role?*
- *What is your understanding of burnout? Vicarious trauma? How does your organization/program address these concerns?*

Resources

- Education for Families
 - Learning about Your Family Member's Illness
 - Coping Tips (Family, Children & Teens)
 - Supporting Recovery
- Other Resources
 - Telephone & Online Support
 - Service Providers

Facilitator use *Resources and References* from handout:

Discuss pre-workshop reading: What resources did participants find helpful?

Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre Health Nexus

www.beststart.org and www.healthnexus.ca

This ready-to-use workshop has been prepared with funds provided by the Government of Ontario. The information herein reflects the views of the authors and is not officially endorsed by the Government of Ontario. The resources and programs cited throughout the workshop are not necessarily endorsed by the Best Start Resource Centre or the Government of Ontario.

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