



Postpartum Parenting: Managing Depression, Anxiety, and Intrusive Thoughts as a (New) Parent

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Disclosures

We have nothing to disclose.

Objectives

- Recognize the role of postpartum depression and anxiety when working with new parents
- Utilize CBT skills for challenging intrusive thoughts related to postpartum OCD
- Discuss ways in which naturally-occurring environmental factors can be incorporated into treatment



Postpartum Anxiety and Depression



- Beginning during pregnancy
- Continuing throughout child's first years of life
- Experienced by mothers and fathers
- Depression
 - 14% of women
 - 10% of men
- Anxiety
 - 6% of pregnant women
 - 10% of postpartum women
- OCD
 - 11% of new mothers report symptoms
 - 3-5% experience postpartum OCD

Contributing Factors

- Presence of OCD from previous onset attacking new target (you always had OCD, now you have kids and OCD)
- Stress, Stress ... **STRESS**
- Sleep deprivation
- Children cause your buttons to rise to the surface so they can press them
- Distorted expectations for pregnancy and parenthood



Postpartum Depression

- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia
- Intense irritability and anger
- Overwhelming fatigue
- Loss of interest in sex
- Lack of joy in life
- Feelings of shame, guilt or inadequacy
- Severe mood swings
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Causes
 - Physical Changes
 - Emotional Factors
 - Environmental Influences
- Symptoms may be dismissed as “baby blues” or hormones

Common Obsessions Associated with Parenting



- Contamination
 - “I am going to give my kid a disease and their life will be horrible and it will be all my fault.”
- Causing harm
 - “I am going to snap like Andrea Yates and end my children violently.”
- Sexually inappropriateness
 - “I am a closeted pedophile who did a pretty good job deceiving everyone until now that there’s a child in my home.”
- Ruining your children(moral scrupulosity)
 - “I didn’t play enough with my child because I am unloving, selfish and bad and his sense of abandonment by me will lead him to a life of drugs and crime.”

Common Compulsions Associated with Parenting

- Excessive rigidity with rules
- Excessive washing
- Avoidance of physical contact
- Reassurance seeking or Confessing
- Excessive research
- Mental review or Rumination
- Excessive checking or Re-enacting
- Avoidance of being alone with child
- Avoidance of triggering media
- Checking for signs of harm
- Avoidance of children in general
- Excessive self-monitoring
- Excessive apologizing, perseverating on discipline issues
- Food and entertainment perfectionism
- Never leaving child alone

Cognitive Behavior Therapy



- Challenging Cognitive Distortions
 - All-or-Nothing: “I am a good dad or a bad dad” vs. “I am a stressed dad”
 - Catastrophizing: “I will ruin my child’s life if I make a bad parenting call” vs. “I can’t predict the future, but will figure out a way to cope with challenges my child may have”
 - Emotional Reasoning: “I feel angry so it must mean I am dangerous” vs. “I feel angry which is what happens to people who have feelings”

Exposure/Response Prevention (E/RP)



- Gradual avoidance reduction
- Volunteering for parenting responsibilities
- Exposure to triggering media
- Exposure to triggering environments
- Elimination of reassurance-seeking/confessing
- Imaginal exposures

Mindfulness

- Observing thoughts and feelings in the present moment without judgment or analysis
- Thoughts are thoughts, not threats
- Feelings are feelings, not facts
- Awareness and acceptance of the urge to do compulsions
- Acceptance of things as they are without attachment to how they “should” be
- Unconditional self-loving kindness



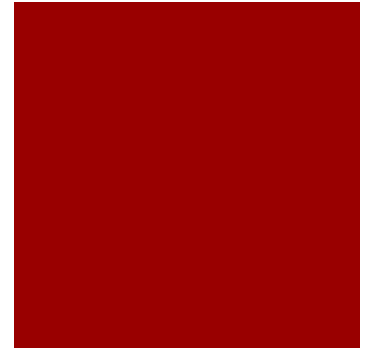
Behavioral Activation

- Healthy lifestyle choices
- Making time for self (outside of parent role)
- Social connections



Ethical Considerations

- Disclosure of symptoms to others
- Incorporating child in treatment
- Risk of exposing child to harm



If treatment works, why do people avoid getting it?

- Fear if they reveal their fears CPS will be called
- Fear they would be deemed a danger to others and could be involuntarily hospitalized
- Fear of judgment, shame, and embarrassment
- Fear they will be deemed an incompetent parent
- Fear if others found out about their thoughts what they might think of them
- Fear that if they're having the thoughts maybe it's true



Key things to remember



- Hiding the depression and anxiety make the situation worse
- OCD about children is still just OCD
- Compulsions do not help but interfere in being a responsible parent
- Being a parent is hard
- Treatment is for the benefit of the entire family
- Children grow up fast and there is a finite amount of time to enjoy them



Thank You!

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