

# Handout 1

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**Depression** is characterized by low mood, sadness, and loss of interest in daily activities that persist for long periods of time. Anxiety is part of depression.

The term **postpartum** describes the first year after the arrival of a baby.

**Postpartum depression** (PPD) is depression that occurs for up to a year after the arrival or loss of a baby. A parent suffering from PPD may experience one or a combination of symptoms, each ranging from mild to severe.

- A low or sad mood
- Loss of interest in fun activities
- Feelings of worthlessness, shame, or guilt
- Thoughts that life is not worth living
- Exhaustion, insomnia
- Anxiety, tension, panic, fearfulness
- Irritability
- Hopelessness, tearfulness
- Poor concentration, memory loss
- Rapid mood swings
- Obsessions, frightening recurring thoughts
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Self-doubt, low self-esteem
- Eating disturbances, loss of appetite, eating too much
- Feeling distance/removed from or lack of love for baby and/or partner
- Thoughts of harming self and/or baby
- Isolation
- Agitation

## **Additionally, a new parent may experience the following:**

- Have trouble sleeping when the baby sleeps (more than the lack of sleep new parents usually experience).
- Feel numb or disconnected from the baby.
- Have scary or negative thoughts about the baby, such as thinking someone will take the baby away or hurt the baby.
- Worry that they will hurt the baby.
- Feel guilty about not being a good parent, or ashamed that she or he cannot care for the baby.



**When these symptoms occur within the first year after the arrival of the baby, and last for more than a week or two at a time, this is postpartum depression. Key aspects are: onset, intensity, and duration. Parents may make a general statement about “not feeling like myself” or others may observe a mother or father as “not like they usually are.”**

# Handout 2

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## Key points of active listening and effective questioning:

- Use body language to show interest and understanding. In most cultures this will include nodding the head and turning the body to face the person speaking.
- Use facial expression to show interest and reflect on what is being said. This may include looking directly at the person speaking, although in some cultures such direct eye contact may not be appropriate until some trust has been established.
- Listen to how things are said by paying attention to a speaker's body language and tone of voice.
- Ask questions to show a desire to understand.
- Summarize and rephrase the discussions to check on an understanding of what has been said and ask for feedback.
- Leave time for silence.
- Know the facts about the topic.
- Be informative, but don't lecture.
- Never judge, no matter what the parent tells you.
- Give people time to come up with their own ideas.
- Stand or sit at the same level as the speaker.
- Ask open-ended questions – for example, using the six key 'helper' questions (Why? What? When? Where? Who? and How?).
- Ask probing questions by following up people's answers with further questions that look deeper into the issue; continually asking, 'But why...?' is useful for doing this.
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure they have been understood, which can be done by rewording a previous question.
- Ask questions about personal points of view by asking how people feel and not just about what they know.

**Once trust has been established, the following statements or questions are appropriate to say or ask new parents:**

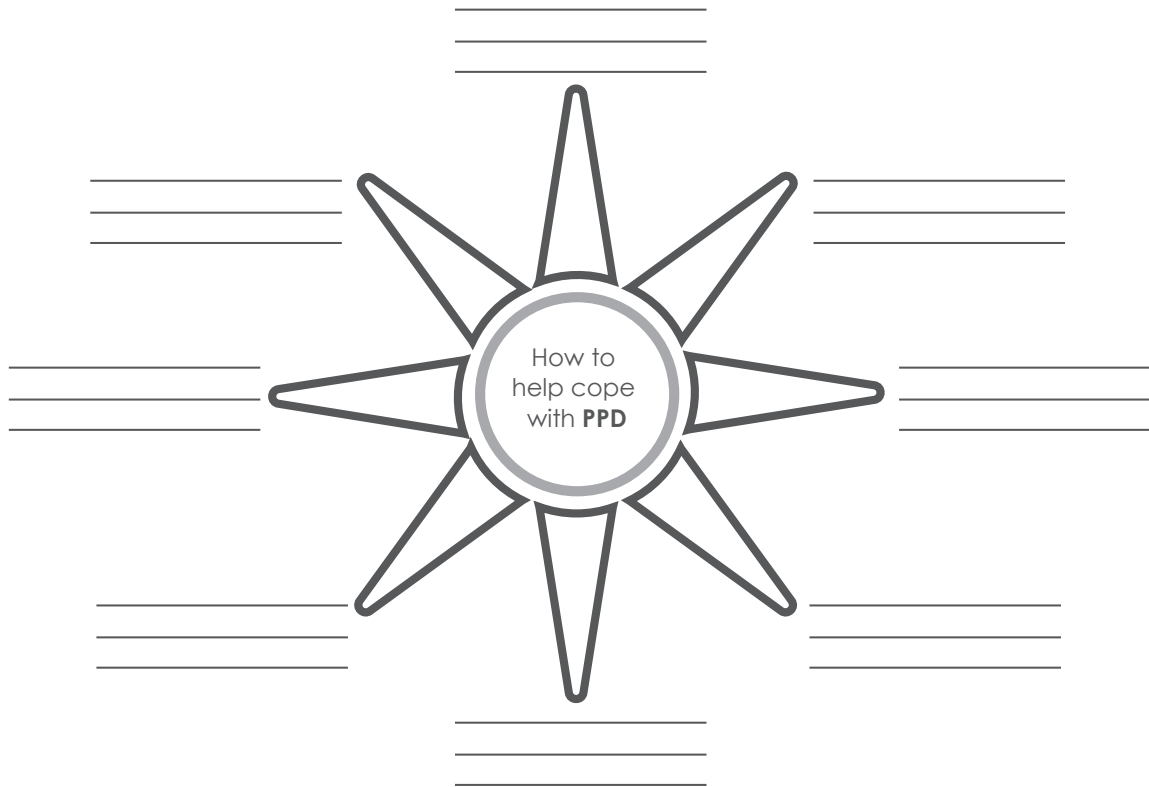
1. Congratulations on the arrival of your child.
2. How old is your child now?
3. Parenthood is a unique and special role to play in life.
4. I am here to support you.
5. How was the pregnancy or adoption process?
6. How was the birth of your child?
7. What is it like for you to be a new parent or a parent again?
8. How are you feeling emotionally after the arrival of your baby? Are you feeling different than what you typically feel like?
9. If the mother or father states she or he has been experiencing symptoms of PPD ask, “When did you first notice you weren’t feeling like yourself?” Additionally, ask the parent, “Have you told anyone else how you are feeling?”
10. What are you doing to take care of yourself?
11. Can you sleep if given the opportunity?  
**Probe:** Do you find it easy to fall asleep? Can you stay asleep? After the baby is fed can you go back to sleep?
12. Do you have an appetite? When did you last eat? What have you eaten today? What’s available to eat in your house?
13. Is there anybody in your family or a neighbor or friend who can watch the baby or help around the house?
14. Is there anybody you can talk to honestly about what you are experiencing?



**If the parent is displaying moderate to severe symptoms of PPD, talk with the family to come up with a plan of action on how to help. Remember that the partner and other family members may also be having signs and symptoms of depression.**

# Handout 3

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## Universal Message:

1. You are not alone.
2. You are not to blame for what you are feeling.
3. You will be well and feel like yourself again.

## Steps to Wellness:

**Education about PPD:** It is important that everyone knows about the onset, intensity, and duration of the signs and symptoms of PPD.

**Sleep:** Recovery depends on quality of sleep. Sleep can heal the body and mind. Someone not sleeping well may be suffering from depression or anxiety.

**Eating nutritious food:** If parents are not eating well, no one will thrive—including the baby.

**Exercise and time for oneself:** To be healthy the body requires a balance of sleep, food, and movement.

**Nonjudgmental listening from others:** New parents need to talk about their journey through pregnancy, birth or the adoption process, and parenthood.

**Emotional support from others:** New parents need supportive and caring people with whom to share and be heard.

**Practical support from others:** Parents need help.

## Plan of Action:

Now let's make a plan of actions:

- How can you get more sleep?
- How is your appetite?
- Who can you ask for help?
- Who can you talk to about what you are experiencing



**The components of *Steps to Wellness* work for everyone, not just new parents. All family members, including children, will benefit from these practical suggestions.**

# Handout 4

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## Peer support should strive to:

- Address the needs of at-risk populations.  
(women of reproductive age, parents-to-be, new parents)
- Confront social isolation.
- Serve as new sources of social support during short-term crises and life transitions.
- Promote coping skills and self-esteem.
- Provide positive role models.
- Display benefits of helping others.
- Meet needs of under-served portions of the population.
- Facilitate referrals to professionals when necessary.
- Enhance social ties to serve as a buffer to stress.
- Help people cope with stress and adversity.
- Educate professionals about gaps and problems in service delivery.
- Assist in development of needed programming for communities.
- Promote social action and funding needs.
- Promote new collaboration between self-help and professional communities.

## **Create a vision diagram:**

1. Think about the current situation for new families in your community.
2. What support do new parents receive?
3. Imagine a future in which new parents and families are fully supported.
4. What would your role in this vision of the future be? What other roles might exist?



# Handout 5

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## Evaluation of the Postpartum Action Workshop

Did this workshop meet the following goals and objectives?

### Workshop Goals:

1. To reach and teach parents to be peer leaders
2. To have participants feel comfortable about the topic of depression
3. To learn and practice how to empower parents, their families, and others

### Workshop Objectives:

1. Learned about postpartum depression (PPD)
2. Learned how to provide quality, personalized support for women and men experiencing PPD
3. Learned the “Steps to Wellness” that can help empower people to help themselves
4. Learned how to help individuals create a plan of action to help them assess their strengths and needs
5. Learned how to build a supportive community for families experiencing PPD

Use the space below and the back, if needed, to write your comments. Your feedback is appreciated.