



# Welcome to EleVATE Group Care!



# Why EleVATE Group Prenatal Care Cares

Welcome to EleVATE Group Care! We are excited you are part of group prenatal care and letting us be a part of your pregnancy and postpartum journey.

EleVATE Group Care focuses and centers the voices of Black birthing people and birthing people of color and their families. EleVATE Group Care is trying to do something different by making prenatal care more inclusive of birthing people who have experienced trauma (community trauma, historical trauma, and personal trauma), provide opportunities to discuss and better cope with stress during pregnancy and beyond, and train health care teams in trauma informed care, anti-racism principles and behavioral health. You know your body best and how to best advocate for you, your baby and family. Throughout prenatal care, we want to make sure your concerns are understood and addressed by health care team members. Our hope is that this different experience can continue to improve health outcomes for all birthing people, babies, and their families.

There are many reasons why Black birthing people and birthing people of color experience more injustice, feel silenced or traumatized during prenatal care, birth experience and postpartum. One reason is because systems (like the education system, justice system and health care system) have developed policies, practices and barriers to justice and liberation. Health care teams and patients participating in EleVATE want to change this to better support Black birthing people and birthing people of color.

Throughout EleVATE group care, we will have opportunities to discuss self-advocacy, what to eat during pregnancy, giving birth, reproductive justice, pre-term birth, self-care, signs of stress, pregnancy discomforts, feeding your baby, postpartum depression, identify your vision for your family, taking care of yourself when baby comes home and ways to deal with stress.



# A Love Letter to Black Birthing People from Black Birth Workers, Midwives, and Physicians

Written by Dr. Ebony Carter

We write this letter as an expression of love because we see you, we hear you, we know you are scared and we are you. In recent years, the press has amplified gross inequities in maternal care and outcomes that we already knew to be true.

As Black birth workers, midwives, physicians and more, we have a front-row seat to the United States' serious obstetric racism manifested in biased clinical interactions, unjust hospital policies and an inequitable healthcare system that leads to disparities in maternal morbidity and mortality for Black women. Unfortunately, this is not anything new and the legacy dates back to slavery and the disregard for Black people in this country. What has changed is our increased awareness of these health injustices.

This collective consciousness of the risk that is carried with our pregnancies casts a shadow of fear over a period that should be full of the joy and promise of new life. We fear that our personhood will be disregarded, our pain will be ignored, and our voices silenced by a medical system that has sought to dominate our bodies and experiment on them without our permission. While this history is reprehensible and our collective risk as Black people is disproportionately high, our purpose in writing this letter is to help Black birthing people recapture the joy and celebration that should be theirs in pregnancy and in the journey to parenthood.

As Black birth workers, we see Black patients desperately seeking safety, security and breaking down barriers to find us for their pregnancy care. They are terrified and looking for kinship and community in our offices. When asked about what they feared was their risk of dying during pregnancy or childbirth, answers ranged from 1-60%. Our actual risk of dying from a pregnancy-related cause, as a Black woman, is 0.0417% (41.7 Black maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) to put that in perspective, our risk of dying is higher walking down the street or driving a car. Based on past and present injustices, we have every right to be scared; but, make no mistake: that fear comes at a cost and Black birthing people are the ones paying the bill!

Stress and chronic worry are associated with poor pregnancy outcomes so this completely justifiable fear, at the population level, is not serving us well personally. Unfortunately, lost in the messaging about racial inequities in maternal mortality is the reality that the vast majority of Black people and babies will survive, thrive and have healthy pregnancy outcomes, despite the terrifying population-level statistics and horrific stories of discrimination and neglect that make us feel like our pregnancies and personal peril are synonymous.

It is immoral that Black patients in the richest country in the world are 3-4 times more likely to die of a pregnancy-related cause than white women and we're more likely to experience pregnancy complications and "near misses" when death is narrowly avoided. Research has done an excellent job defining reproductive health disparities in this country, but prioritizing and funding meaningful strategies, policies, and programs to close this gap have not taken precedence--especially initiatives and research that are headed by Black women. This is largely because researchers and



healthcare systems continue evaluating strategies that focus on behavior change and narratives that identify individual responsibility as a sole cause of inequity. Let us be clear, Black people and our behaviors ARE NOT THE PROBLEM. The problem is white supremacy, classism, sexism, heteropatriarchy, and obstetric racism. These must be recognized and addressed across all levels of power.

We endorse systems-level changes that are at the root of promoting health equity in our reproductive outcomes. These changes include paid parental leave, Medicaid expansion/extension, reimbursement for doula and lactation services, increased access to perinatal mental health and wellness services, and so much more (see <https://blackmamasmatter.org>).

While the inequities and their solutions are grounded in the need for systemic change, we realize that these population-level solutions feel abstract when our sisters and siblings ask us, “So what can I do to advocate for myself and my baby, right now in this pregnancy?” To be clear, no amount of personal hypervigilance on our part is going to fix these systemic problems, but we want to leave you with a few pearls that may be helpful for self-advocacy and the reassurance that you and your baby are not pre-destined to have a bad outcome:

1. Seek culturally and ethnically congruent care- It is critical that you find a physician or midwife who centers you and provides support and care that affirms the strengths and assets of you, your family, and your community when cultural and ethnic congruency are not possible for you and your pregnancy.
2. Ask how your clinicians are actively working to ensure optimal and equitable experiences for Black birthing individuals - We recommend asking your clinician and/or hospital what, if anything, they are doing to address healthcare inequities, obstetric racism or implicit bias in their pregnancy and postpartum care.
3. Well-Person Care-the best time to optimize pregnancy and birth outcomes is before you get pregnant. Set up an appointment with a midwife, OB/GYN, or your primary care physician before you get pregnant. Discuss your concerns about pregnancy and use this time to optimize your health.
4. Advocate for a second opinion-if something does not sound right to you or you have questions that were not adequately answered, a clinician should never be offended when you seek a second opinion.
5. For those who deliver in a hospital (by choice or necessity), consider these factors in your selection- 24/7 access to obstetricians and dedicated anesthesiologists in the hospital, trauma-informed medical/mental health/social services, lactation consultation, supportive trial of labor after cesarean section policy, and massive blood transfusion protocol.
6. Seek doula support!- There is evidence that women supported by doulas have better pregnancy-related outcomes and experiences. Many major cities in the United States have started to provide race-concordant doula care for Black birthing people for free!
7. Don't forget about your mental health. As stated before, chronic stress from racism impacts birth outcomes. Having a mental health clinician is a great way to mitigate this.
8. Ask your clinician, hospital, or insurance company about participating in group prenatal care and/or nurse home visiting models because both are associated with improved birth outcomes. Many institutions are implementing group care that provides race-concordant care.

9. Ask your clinician, hospital, or local health department for recommendations to a lactation consultant or educator who can support your efforts in breast/chest/body-feeding.

We invite you to consider this truth: you, alone, do not carry the entire population-level risk of Black birthing people on your shoulders. We, along with many allies, advocates, and activists, are outraged and angered by generations of racism and mistreatment of Black birthing people in our health systems and hospitals. We are channeling our frustration and disgust to demand substantive and sustainable change.

Our purpose here is to provide love and reassurance to our sisters and siblings who are going through their pregnancies terrorized by our nation's past and present failures to promote health equity for us and our babies. We love taking care of our community. We call upon all of our clinical colleagues to educate themselves to be ethically and equitably equipped to care for and serve Black people.

Finally, to birthing Black families, please remember this: If you choose to have a baby, the outcome and experience must align with what's right for you and your baby to survive and thrive. So much has been stolen, but we will recapture the joy and celebration that should be ours in pregnancy and the journey to parenthood.

# Values of EleVATE Group Prenatal Care

## Radical Listening

**Radical listening: How we listen is more important than what we say<sup>1</sup>**

- i. Trusting community members to be the best solvers of their problems
- ii. Authentically asking for community member ideas and listening without judgement, criticizing, or stating what is right and what is wrong based on our own ideas
- iii. Acting on what you hear

Radical listening involves removing judgment, being understanding to let the process develop naturally and show listening is happening by being accountable to community member ideas.<sup>1</sup>



## Reproductive Justice

**Reproductive justice: Human right to control our reproductive and sexual health**

Reproductive justice is a link between health, sexuality, birth, reproduction and human rights:

- The human right to maintain personal independence (body, mind, spirit etc.)
- To have children and all options of giving birth
- To not have children and all options of preventing pregnancy
- Parent children in safe and sustainable communities with needed supports from community<sup>2</sup>

The voice and choice for reproductive decisions is influenced by systems. Systems can create barriers that leave women without choices or access to reproductive options. This is reproductive oppression.

## Trauma Informed Care

**Trauma:** An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced historically or presently by an individual or community that has adverse effects on functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being

*Six key principles of trauma informed care that can address trauma and further healing.*<sup>3</sup>

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice and choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues



## Racial Equity

**Racial equity: A state in which outcomes are not predicted by race**<sup>1</sup>

Racial equity is achieved by giving people what they need, changing power and helping individuals and systems with tools to support communities most impacted by racial inequities

<sup>1</sup> Ferguson Commission, 2015

<sup>2</sup> In Our Own Voice: Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

<sup>3</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# Prenatal, Birth and Postpartum Bill of Rights

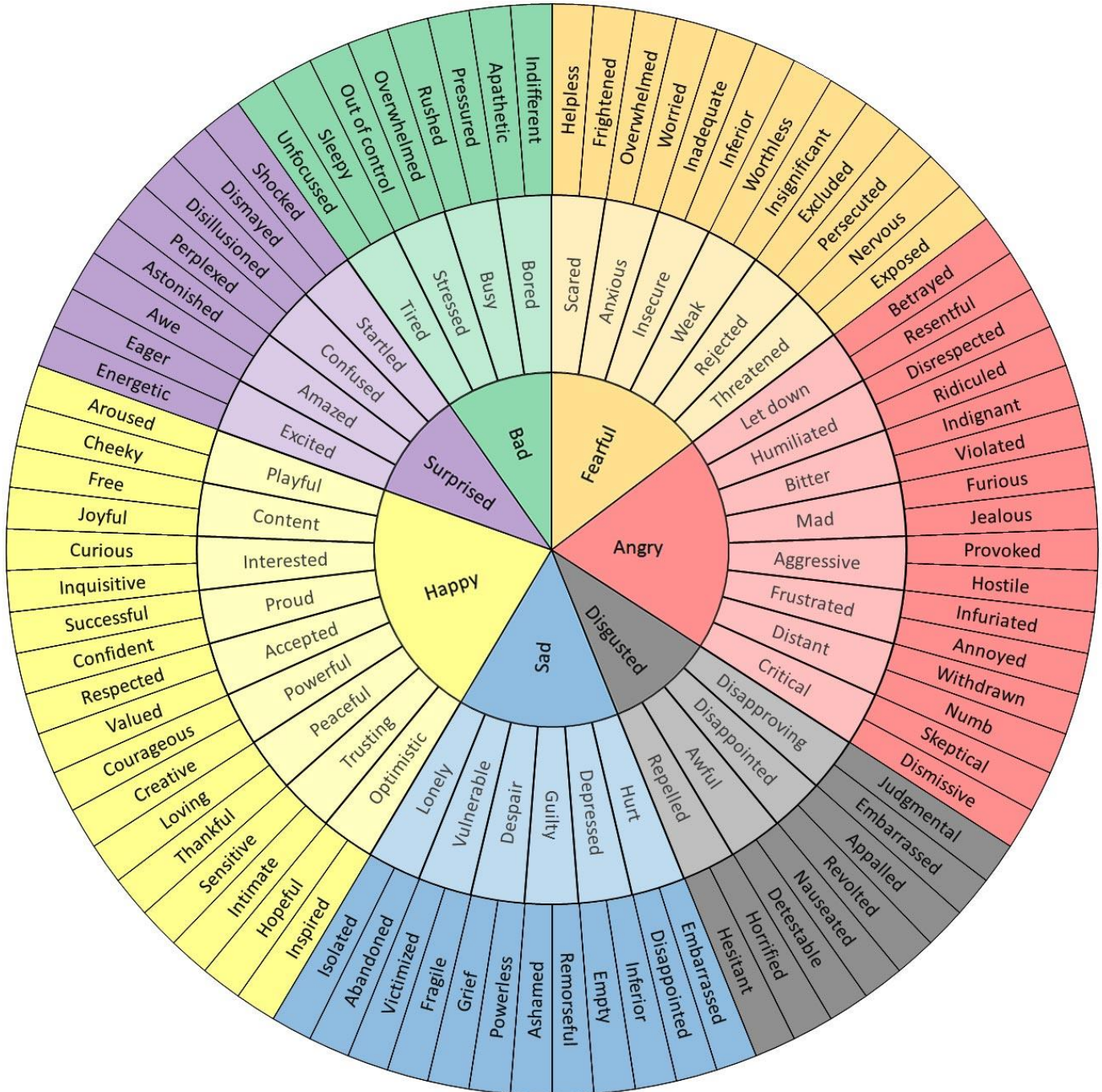
- 1) *I have a right to determine my own reproductive choice*
- 2) *I have a right to determine what reproductive justice means to me*
- 3) *I have a right to be listened to*
- 4) *I have the right to decide to be pregnant and how I desire to deliver*
- 5) *I have the right to decide the environment I will deliver in*
- 6) *I have the right to be treated with respect*
- 7) *I have the right to prenatal care*
- 8) *I have the right to have support person(s) present with me during prenatal care, birth experiences and postpartum*
- 9) *I have the right to be provided options for preventing or ending a pregnancy*
- 10) *I have the right to recover in the hospital, at home or at a place of my choosing*
- 11) *I have the right to be informed of my baby's well-being and safety*
- 12) *I have the right to feed my baby how I chose*
- 13) *I have the right to ask for help and for the health care staff to be responsive*
- 14) *I have the right to collaborate with my clinician to maintain the health and safety of myself and my baby*
- 15) *I have the right to honest, comprehensive, unbiased information from health care teams*
- 16) *I have a right to ask: Who should I speak to when I am not feeling respected or listened to?*





# Mind Power: Feelings Wheel

During pregnancy, we can have a lot of different feelings. Throughout EleVATE, we will refer to this feelings wheel to help cope with the many different feelings that may come up.



# Prenatal Testing

Part of your prenatal health assessment includes some blood and urine tests and usually at least one screening ultrasound. These tests can screen for a possible problem or help diagnose a condition. You have a choice as to whether or not you complete these tests and below are questions to ask before having any testing done. Asking questions before having any lab testing done is essential to making an informed choice. Asking questions is your right.

## Questions to ask before having any lab testing might include:

### 1) What is the test for?

- Where does the test take place?
- Who will be doing the test?
- How will we use the information from the test?
- What are the alternatives to the test?
- What are the possible side effects of the test? For me? For baby?

### 2) Which tests are recommended to keep me and my baby strong and healthy?

### 3) What should my health care team know about me before the test begins?

- What strong reactions might I experience?
- What is the plan if I become triggered?
- What helps me stay calm?

### 4) How and when will I get my results?

### 5) What will the results mean?

Black women are at higher risk of developing preeclampsia. Preeclampsia is a very serious pregnancy complication that includes high blood pressure, protein in urine and impacts organs like the kidneys. It is also a risk factor for heart disease.

EleVATE materials are for information purposes only and are not to be used as medical advice. Always seek medical advice from your health care team.

# Session 1: Pregnancy and Self-Care

## Voice and Choice:

1. How will you use your voice to advocate for your food choices?
2. How will you use your voice to advocate for your self-care choices?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Belly Breathing

*Pregnancy:* What I Eat

*Self-Care:* What is Self-Care?

*Mind Power:* Mind, Body and Behavior Connection

*Closing:* What does healthy look like to me?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Smoking, Alcohol, and Drugs

*“You never understand life until it grows inside of you”*

- Sandra Chami Kassis

## Belly Breathing

Belly breathing is deep breathing. Your belly will rise and fall when you take a breath.

Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a deep breath in through your nose and hold for the count of one, two and three. Then let go of your deep breath through your mouth. Continue to place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a deep breath through your nose, hold for the count of one, two and three and breath out through your mouth.

Belly breathing can be used when you are feeling a lot of emotions, feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or anxious and during birth or after the baby is born. Belly breathing is one strategy to help you feel calm and can be used in a variety of situations.





## Vision for Pregnancy

There are many things to think about during pregnancy. Some things you might think about are how to take care of yourself, food choices, or how to help other children adjust to a new baby. What is most important to you during your pregnancy?

*What is most important to you during your pregnancy?*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



## Group Agreements

Group agreements are helpful for groups to work together, respect each other and discuss disagreements. A group agreement is created together and helps guide us while we are in group together.

**What makes a successful group?**

**What agreements do you want to include?**



# Topics During Pregnancy

## What topics do you want to know more about?

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- What is happening to my body?



- What do I eat while I am pregnant?



- Exercise during pregnancy



- New baby care



- Baby and mom feeding



- Self-care



- Infant development and learning



- Oral health: care of teeth and gums



- Family relationships and well-being



- Spouse/support partner well-being



- Getting other children ready for baby



- Stress and relaxing



- Birth of baby



- Transportation



- Drinking water



- Physical and emotional safety



- Coping with past pregnancy loss/complications with pregnancy



- Communication/trust in provider



- What should I do if there is an emergency?



- Mental wellness: how I think, feel, and act



## What I Eat

During pregnancy, eating healthy is more important than ever. What you eat directly affects your baby's growth, development, and the way you feel. Your relationship with food is important especially during stressful events.

Sometimes it can be hard to find healthy things to eat or offer healthy food to your baby and children. It can be difficult to get to the store or buy certain foods based on your budget or find a grocery store that has healthy choices.

### ***What is your vision for a healthy pregnancy?***

- Go to all your prenatal visits
- Eat food that feels good to you
- Exercise in ways that feel good for you
- Sleeping
- 
- 

***There is not a one size fits all eating plan or weight!***

**Use these questions to think about your food choices during pregnancy.**

**How do you feel about your food choices?**

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**What food choices are going well for you?**

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**How are your food choices connected to your feelings?**

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## Eat the Rainbow

**Red foods: Strawberries, watermelon, tomatoes**

**Green foods: Lettuce, spinach, apples**

**Yellow/Orange foods: Carrots, oranges, peppers**

**Blue/Purple foods: Grapes, berries, eggplant**

**Drink 8 glasses of water per day**

**Protein** (2-3 servings daily): Protein helps your baby grow, especially the brain, muscles, and other organs.

### **Foods high in protein:**

- Chicken, fish, beef, turkey
- Eggs
- Yogurt and cheese

**Folic Acid** (400-1000 mcg daily): Folic acid especially when taken early in pregnancy, folic acid helps your baby's brain and spinal column develop. Some prenatal vitamins contain the needed amount and it is good to eat it in your food too.

### **Foods high in folic acid:**

- Lentils and chickpeas
- Oatmeal and fortified cereals
- Asparagus, spinach, broccoli

**Calcium** (3-4 servings daily): Calcium helps build your baby's bones, teeth buds and regulates muscle function. It also keeps your bones and teeth strong.

### **Foods high in calcium:**

- Tofu and white beans
- Broccoli, spinach, collards, turnip greens
- Water-packed salmon, mackerel, sardines
- Milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, cheese



**Iron:** is needed during pregnancy because it helps with the extra blood your body needs. Some prenatal vitamins contain the needed amount and it is good to eat it in your food too.

**Foods high in iron:**

- Lean beef, chicken, fish
- Dark leafy green vegetables, spinach, kale, collard greens
- Brussels sprouts, green peas,
- lima beans, lentils
- Dried fruits, raisins, prunes
- Whole grain bread, cereal

**Omega-3 Essential Fatty Acids**

250 mg daily especially during the last three months when your baby's brain is forming, try to get this nutrient every day. Some prenatal vitamins contain the needed amount and it is good to eat it in your food too.

**Foods high in omega-3 essential fatty acids:**

- Fish
- Dark green vegetables
- Walnuts, ground flax seeds
- Kidney beans



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice to feed your food choices?

## *Foods to Avoid*

Some foods are more likely to carry bacteria or germs that can be harmful to your unborn baby. Be careful when preparing foods, especially meat, eggs, and fish.

Here are some food safety tips that might be helpful:

- Cook meat and eggs until they are well done and do not eat undercooked eggs.
- Avoid unpasteurized cheese or milk.
- Avoid fish with high levels of mercury: shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish, raw fish.
- Limit other fish and seafood to 2 servings per week: shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, crab.
- Heat up lunch meat and other prepared meats, such as hot dogs and Vienna sausages, until steaming hot. You can let them cool off before you eat them.



## Thinking About Your Meals

As your baby gets bigger, eating 5 or 6 small meals a day may work better than 2 or 3 large meals. It is important to drink 8 -10 glasses of water every day.

We all gain and lose weight in different ways and sometimes we have to try many different small meals if we are feeling morning sickness or feel nauseous throughout the pregnancy:



What will I eat for breakfast?



What will I eat for lunch?



What will I eat for a snack?



What will I eat for dinner?





# What is Self-Care?

Self-care is the practice of taking an active role in taking care of one's own well-being and happiness.

**Directions:** *Circle the ways you take care of yourself?*

- Sleep
- Quiet time
- Laugh
- Meditate
- Take a ride
- Cup of tea or coffee
- Watch TV
- Take a bath or shower
- Get out of the house
- Have sex
- Listen to music
- Talk to someone
- Eat your favorite food
- Shop
- Write
- Take a walk
- Sing
- Pray
- Arts and crafts
- Getting hair or nails done
- Take a nap
- Try a new activity
- Drink water
- Dance
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



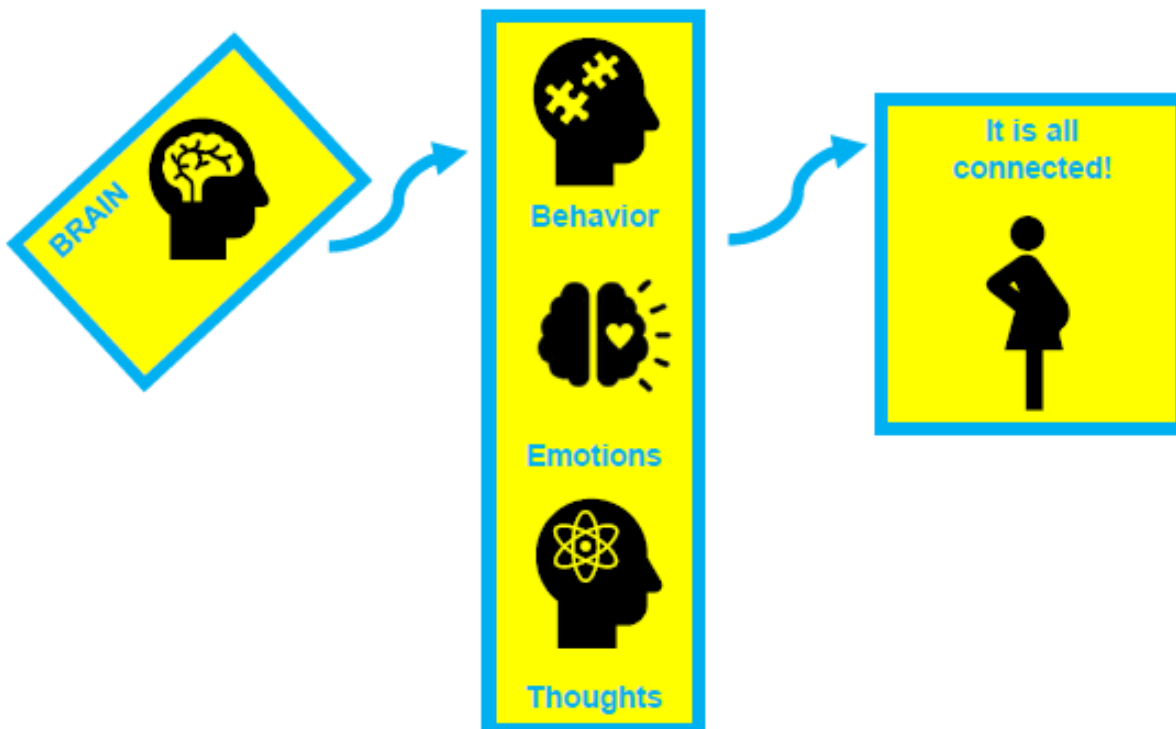
**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice of self-care?

# Mind Power

*Check-in: How are you feeling today?*

## Mind, Body and Behavior Connection

Stress, anxiety, and worrying can affect thoughts, emotions and even our bodies. We can have emotional reactions to people, places, or things that we might not even be aware of or know why we are reacting. When we see, taste, feel, touch, or hear something our brains send a reaction and the reaction could be a behavior, emotion or thought. It's all connected and can affect you and baby.



**Check-in with your behaviors, emotions, and thoughts:** Take a moment to check in. You can ask yourself:

How is my mind feeling?

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How is my body feeling?

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How am I reacting?

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# Healthy Me: Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

*There is NO safe amount of alcohol or drug use during pregnancy!*

## Smoking

Pregnant people who smoke or who are exposed to second-hand smoke have a higher risk of problems during their pregnancy. Smoking also affects your baby's health. Nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke pass through the placenta to the baby, decreasing the nutrients and oxygen babies need to grow.

### **Smoking or contact with second-hand smoke may cause:**

- Miscarriage and preterm birth (birth before 38 weeks)
- Genetic defects and learning difficulties
- More colds, ear infections, or lung problems
- Babies may be born addicted to nicotine, making them jittery and fussy
- Babies are more than twice as likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

## Alcohol

Women who drink during pregnancy are more likely to have a miscarriage, stillbirth, baby born with fetal alcohol syndrome or a baby born with a dangerously low birth weight. After birth, alcohol can still pass-through breastfeeding.

Drinking even small amounts of alcohol during your pregnancy can cause your baby to have fetal alcohol syndrome, a genetic condition that can cause:

- Poor growth
- Mental retardation
- Physical defects
- Vision and hearing problems
- Learning and behavioral problems

## Drugs and Medicines

Prescription medicines, over the counter medicines, herbal products, and street drugs can cause problems for you and your developing baby. Most drugs enter your baby's blood stream and can cause serious problems.

### **Use of drugs and medicines can cause:**

- Physical and mental birth defects
- Preterm birth
- Babies born addicted to or dependent on drugs

- Placental abruption (separation of the placenta from the uterus)
- After birth, drugs and medicines can still pass-through breastfeeding.

Even when you know it is good to stop smoking, drinking, or using drugs during pregnancy, it may be hard to stop.

- How can you take care of yourself?
- What supports or resources do you need?

**Here are some things you can do:**

- Join a support group and talk with people who have stopped. You can call free help lines any time you are feeling like you need to smoke, drink, or use drugs, or when you just want to talk with someone.
- Get support from family and friends by calling someone when you have a strong urge.
- Satisfy the craving another way by chewing gum, drinking water, having a cup of tea, eating a snack, watching television, or doing something else to distract yourself.
- Exercise when you feel the urge. You can take a short walk or do some stretches.
- Talk with people you trust.





# Session 2: Pregnancy Discomforts and Stress

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate for your choices in group?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate when you feel stressed?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Mindful Eating

*Pregnancy:* Common Discomforts During Pregnancy

*Self-Care:* Goal Setting

*Mind Power:* Finding Calmness

*Closing:* What are my pregnancy hopes now and in the future?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Taking Care of Myself

*“People always say that pregnant women have a glow. And I say it’s because you’re sweating.”*

- Anonymous

## Mindful Eating

The way you eat during pregnancy and after baby is born might be different:

You might be eating more than usual

You might be eating less than usual because of morning sickness or heartburn

You might be eating more fruits and vegetables

You might be craving foods you never thought you would eat before

You might be thinking about how the food you eat affects your baby

You might be thinking about what foods to not eat during pregnancy

Food choices affect mom and baby. ***Eating is directly connected with our thoughts, our feelings, and how our bodies feel.*** Being aware of what we are eating is one way to take care of ourselves and be mindful of how we feel.



## Group Agreements

Group agreements are helpful for groups to work together, respect each other and discuss disagreements.

What will the group do when a group member follows the group agreement?

What will the group do when a group member does not follow the group agreement?



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice in group?







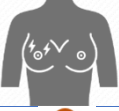


# Pregnancy: Discomforts

Discomforts during pregnancy are different for each woman and sometimes each pregnancy.









**Health care system and patient:** Asking questions and advocating for your needs are your rights. Your health care team is responsible for understanding and addressing your questions and concerns. You know your body best!

What discomforts are you experiencing? What are things you have done to help feel better?

## Have you experienced any of these common discomforts?

Discomfort		Regularly	Sometimes
Headaches			
Feeling dizzy			
Mood changes			
Tired			
Bad breath Too much spit			
Heartburn			
Breast pain Nipple pain			
Nausea Vomiting			
Cramps			



<b>Low back pain</b>			
<b>Peeing more often</b>			
<b>Constipation Diarrhea</b>			
<b>Hands Swelling Feet Swelling</b>			
<b>Leg cramps</b>			
<b>Hard to breathe</b>			
<b>Abdominal Pain Pelvic Pain</b>			
<b>Tooth Pain Bleeding Gums</b>			
<b>Other:</b>			



# Self-Care: Goal Setting

*"Nothing can dim the light that shines from within." -Maya Angelou*

We all have our own special light that shines and makes us unique. Goals can help us shine our special light and help to overcome challenges, changes and motivate us to do new things. Building your strength of understanding your emotions can increase confidence, clarity, calmness and comes with power to move forward towards our goals.

Everyone can benefit from understanding emotions. With understanding emotions comes the power to create calmness, clarity, confidence, and to move forward with our goals.

## BABY GOAL

## PARENT GOAL

## MIND POWER GOAL

## GROUP GOAL

# Mind Power

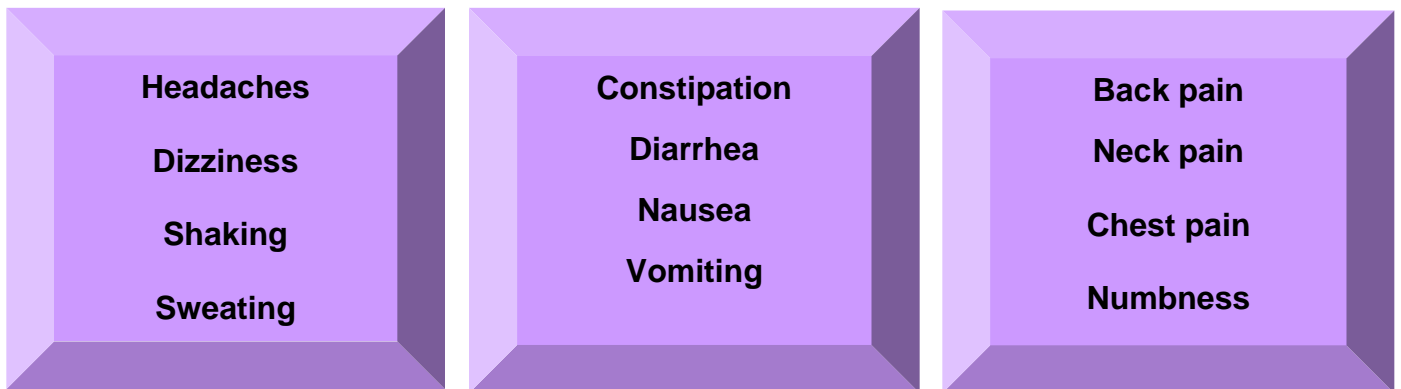
## Check-in: How are you feeling today?

### Signs of Stress

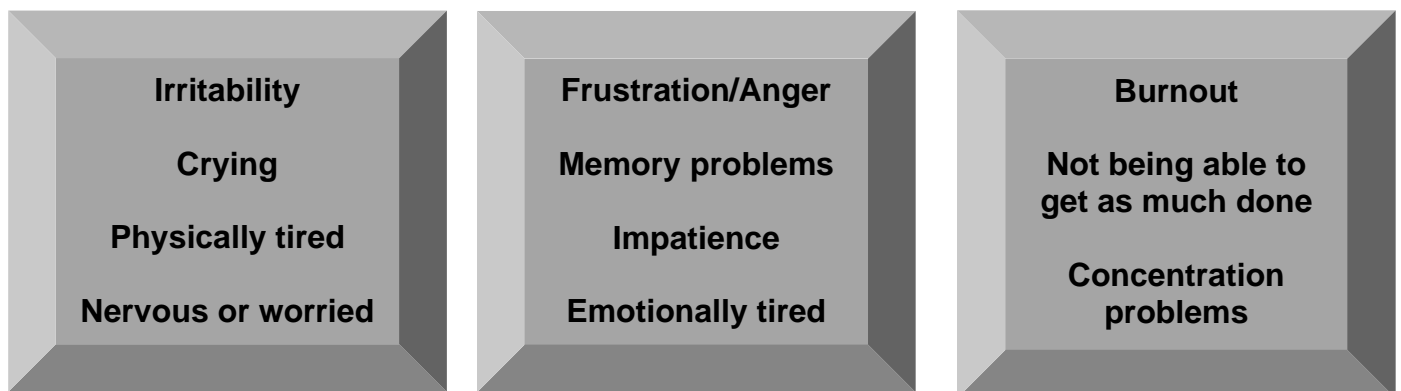
Stress is common! During pregnancy and after birth, some women find that they feel more stressed or feel stressed out more quickly.

It can be hard to know, accept or figure out how you are feeling. Physical discomforts of pregnancy can cause stress too. Some people have physical, behavioral, and emotional signs of stress:

#### Common physical signs of stress



#### Common emotions and behaviors associated with stress



## Finding Calmness

What does calm mean to you? This is a dimmer light switch. We can turn the knob to turn the lights up or down. When we feel an intense emotion, the light is turned all the way up. When we calm down, the light starts to turn down.



We all feel stressed sometimes and our stress can turn our emotions and body all the way up like the light.

List five emotions you are feeling right now:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

How does your body, mind and emotions feel when the light is turned all the way up?

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**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate when you feel stressed?



# Healthy Me: Information on Taking Care of Myself

***During pregnancy, you may have some discomforts from time to time because of the changes that take place including:***

- Changes in hormones that help your body get ready for labor, birth, and breastfeeding
- Your growing baby puts pressure on your pelvis and lower back and presses against organs in your body.

These discomforts are not usually severe or dangerous and there are many things that you can do to be more comfortable. If you are ever worried or in great discomfort or pain, talk to your health care team

## Taking Care of Your Body

### Your changing body

Many pregnant women experience back pain. There may be other causes, but lower back pain is usually caused by some of the changes happening in your body.

### Your body may feel a little off balance

The growing baby tips you forward. To keep from losing balance, you may lean forward and bring your head and shoulders forward. This puts a strain on your spine.

### Your back and pelvis are less stable

The hormones of pregnancy relax the joints in the pelvis and the ligaments in the lower back. These changes are helpful later during your baby's birth. During pregnancy, the changes that relax the pelvic and back bones can cause muscles to tighten, slow blood flow to the legs, and put pressure on nerves.



### Exercise

Regular exercise can help you have energy, maintain your weight, and help prevent diabetes and high blood pressure. It is fine to continue with most exercises during pregnancy. Walking and swimming are good exercises to start in pregnancy. Listen to your body- if you can talk while you exercise, you're not overdoing it.

## **Abdomen (Belly) and Pelvic Pain**

**What's going on:** Ligaments, joints, and muscles that support your uterus are stretched as the baby grows; your pelvic bone may separate slightly.

**What can help:** Taking a warm bath, gentle movement, changing your position, using a belly band or maternity belt for abdominal support, empty bladder

**When to call:** Call if the pain is very bad and it's not helped by a warm bath, support, and rest

## **Cramps**

**What's going on:** You might notice muscle contractions in the uterus, which can feel like your belly is getting tight or your baby is "balling up"

**What can help:** Drink lots of water, take turns walking and resting, empty your bladder

**When to call:** Call if the pain is very bad and it's not helped by a warm bath, support, and rest. Call if contractions come regularly, are coming closer together, and do not go away, especially if you have more than 4 – 6 contractions in one hour.

## **Back Pain**

**What's going on:** Your normal weight gain during pregnancy can strain the small muscles in your lower back

**What can help:** Use good posture, stay active, rest when the pain is too severe. There are several exercises that can prevent or help back pain, your provider may be able to provide some low back exercises and stretches. You can also use a maternity belt or belly band to support the weight of the baby. Physical therapy can also be helpful

**When to call:** Call if you notice that the pain is happening in a pattern. Sometimes women can feel contractions in their back first



## **Breasts**

**What's going on:** Your pregnancy hormones are working to get your body ready to breastfeed, which can cause tenderness and heaviness

**What can help:** Wear a bra with good support. You may need to size up your bra one or more times during your pregnancy. You may also need to size up your bra if you decide to provide breastmilk for your baby

## *Shortness of Breath*

**What's going on:** As your uterus grows, it puts pressure on your lower lungs, which can make you feel short of breath or have a hard time taking a deep breath

**What can help:** Take slow, deep breaths regularly. Use good posture to give your lungs plenty of room to expand. Stay active at a pace that feels comfortable for you and take breaks or rest when you need them. Avoid lying flat. Call your provider if the shortness of breath continues to worsen.

## *Heartburn*

**What's going on:** Acid from your stomach is pushed up into your throat because your uterus pushes up on your stomach as it grows. Pregnancy hormones also contribute to this

**What can help:** Do not eat food or drinks that bother you. Eat small meals more often. Sit up for at least 30 minutes after eating. Eat your food slowly. Drink only between meals. Wear loose clothes. Sleep with your head raised on pillow

## *Constipation*

**What's going on:** Your intestines slow down your digestion due to hormone changes and to get the most vitamins and minerals out of your food

**What can help:** Eat raw fruits, dried fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other foods that have a lot of fiber. Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water each day. Walk or exercise every day

## *Changes in Mood or Energy*

**What's going on:** Your mood or energy level can change because you are tired, your pregnancy hormones are changing, or you might be experiencing depression

**What can help:** Talk with supportive friends, family members, or other people. Get exercise or take a walk. Practice relaxation breathing and other focusing or mindfulness activities

**When to call:** Mood changes that make it hard for you to go on with your daily activities may be signs of depression. Call if you have any thoughts or feelings about hurting yourself or someone else

### ***Emotional Hygiene***

- Identifying how you are feeling
- Identifying how others around you are feeling
- Expressing the feeling in ways support people can understand

## *Tiredness or Dizziness*

**What's going on:** There are several reasons why you could feel tired or dizzy, including: hormone changes and greater blood flow, low blood pressure, low blood sugar, being dehydrated, or having anemia (low iron in your blood)

**What can help:** Stand up and sit down slowly, and take your time getting out of bed. Eat small meals often, and make sure you have protein with each meal. Drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of water each day. You may want to limit or avoid sugary foods and drinks, like soda or juice

**When to call:** If you feel dizzy often, especially if you fall or faint. Extreme tiredness may be a sign of anemia, which can be treated

## *Leg Cramps and Swelling*

**What's going on:** Lots of things can cause discomforts in your legs. You might have cramps because of low calcium or potassium in your diet, or poor circulation of your blood. Swelling often happens because of poor circulation, changes in your pregnancy hormones, or more blood and fluid in your body to support your pregnancy.

**What can help:** Eat foods high in calcium, potassium, and magnesium, such as milk, cheese, yogurt, greens, bananas, or almonds. Drink at least 8 – 10 glasses of water per day. Stay active and get exercise. Raise your feet and legs throughout the day if possible, and wear support hose or stockings. Avoid socks and hose with elastic bands. Try not to cross your legs. If you have cramps, you can put your feet up, pull your toes up and put weight on the foot of the leg that has a cramp to stretch your muscles

**When to call:** Redness, swelling, pain, and heat in one part of your leg may be a blood clot. Swelling that does not get better after rest, drinking fluids, or spreads beyond your hands and feet maybe a sign of pre-eclampsia

## *Bladder/peeing more often*

**What's going on:** Pressure on your bladder from your growing uterus causes you to pee more often

**What can help:** Drink at least 8 – 10 glasses of water per day, avoid caffeine, go to the bathroom as soon as you can when you feel the urge

**When to call:** If you feel burning when peeing, notice less pee, or have lower back pains. These can be signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI)





## *Vagina*

**What's going on:** You might notice more vaginal discharge because of changes in your pregnancy hormones.

**What can help:** Do not douche. You may use unscented panty liners as needed

**When to call:** If there is burning, itching, or an odor it could be a vaginal infection

## *Vulva (external genital area)*

**What's going on:** Enlarged vulva appearance, possible swelling and ingrown hairs can occur. This is usually due to hormone changes, blood flow to the region and weight gain

**What can help:** Drink at least 8 – 10 glasses of water per day, avoid irritating creams or hair removal treatment

**When to call:** If there is a possible ingrown hair infection, raised bumps that are sore to touch or any abnormal skin sore

## *Skin*

**What's going on:** Dryness, cracking, stretch marks and sensitivity is usually due to hormone changes and weight gain. Skin is stretching and can be itchy to make room for baby

**What can help:** Staying moisturized, especially during colder months is important. Avoid water-based moisturizers, moisturize the whole body daily, coconut oil is fine on breast- even when breastfeeding

**When to call:** If there is any rash

## *Hair and Nails*

**What's going on:** More hair growth, shedding and/or loss after birth. This is usually due to the extra vitamins and nutrients you are taking.

**What can help:** Keep hair moisturized and in protective styles. Adding a satin hair bonnet and maintaining styles without too much tension. Make sure to thoroughly dry hands and moisturize hands so nails do not become brittle and weak.

**When to call:** If there is any indication of fungal or bacterial infection of the scalp or nail.

## *Healthy Gums and Teeth*

It is important to have healthy gums and teeth, especially during your pregnancy. Hormone changes in pregnancy can make gum disease worse.

### **Teeth, gums, and mouth**

**What's going on:** Your gums may bleed because your pregnancy hormones make them more sensitive and it might be easier to get infections. Toothaches can happen because of infections or decay. Your teeth might also be more sensitive during pregnancy. You might notice bad breath because your mouth has more bacteria or dries out more quickly.

**What can help:** Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush and floss daily. See a dentist during your pregnancy and get your teeth cleaned. You may use mouthwash. Drink at least 8 – 10 glasses of water per day.

**When to call:** Tooth pain, bleeding gums, or other problems that do not get better with regular brushing and flossing maybe signs of gum disease or tooth decay.

### **Improve your oral health!**

- Get a dental exam
- Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste
- Floss your teeth every day
- Use a mouth rinse
- Eat a balanced diet
- Don't use any kind of tobacco

# Session 3: Feeding My Baby

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate for your choices to feed your baby?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate for your choices for your family?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

R.A.I.N.S.

*Pregnancy:* Feeding My Baby

*Self-Care:* Taking Care of Myself and My Family

*Mind Power:* Stop, Breathe, Think

*Closing:* What does my family look like now and in the future?

*Healthy Me:* Information for My Family

*"You are proof that love before first sight does exist."*

– Araceli M. Ream

# R.A.I.N.S.

R.A.I.N.S. is a tool to practice self-compassion and acknowledge times we judge ourselves, other people and things around us. As you practice using R.A.I.N.S. it can help you recognize the emotions and judgements you are experiencing and normalize our experiences.

**R-** **Recognize** when a strong emotion or thought is present.

*What is a strong emotion or thought you have felt before?*

**A-** **Allow** yourself to experience the strong emotion or thought and try not to judge yourself for feeling this way.

*How was the experience feeling that emotion or thought?*

**I-** **Investigate** how the strong emotion or thought is making your body feel.

*How did your mind, spirit, and body feel?*

**N-** **Non-identify** with the strong emotion or thought and separate it from the situation.

*What was the situation? What was the emotion?*

**S-** **Self-compassion** is accepting we are human and all that makes you unique

*How can you be kind to yourself?*



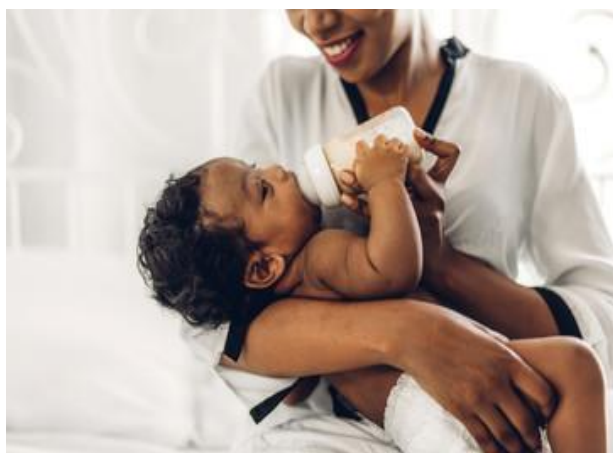
# Feeding My Baby

My plan for feeding my baby is:

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*A Fed Baby  
is the Best  
Baby*





## Feeding My Baby Stories

“I chose to breastfeed because I received education on it. My choice to breastfeed broke a generational curse of misinformation and misunderstanding surrounding nursing a child.”

“I wanted to give up on breastfeeding several times a day. I had to figure out what was nutritionally best for him. Some day’s breastfeeding was the best and some days bottle feeding was the best. I was so excited when I was able to add solids to his diet.”

“I very quickly realized I wasn’t making enough breastmilk for my baby. I went to a lactation counselor and after working with them I had to change my feeding plan from only breastmilk to formula and breastmilk. It was hard not to feel guilty for my body not being able to produce enough breastmilk, but my baby is healthy, happy, and well fed and that’s what matters to me.”

“At first breastfeeding is very hard because your baby needs you all the time. But once you learn feeding techniques, how to properly latch it becomes easier and it becomes even easier with a support system. I breastfed both my children for over two years.”

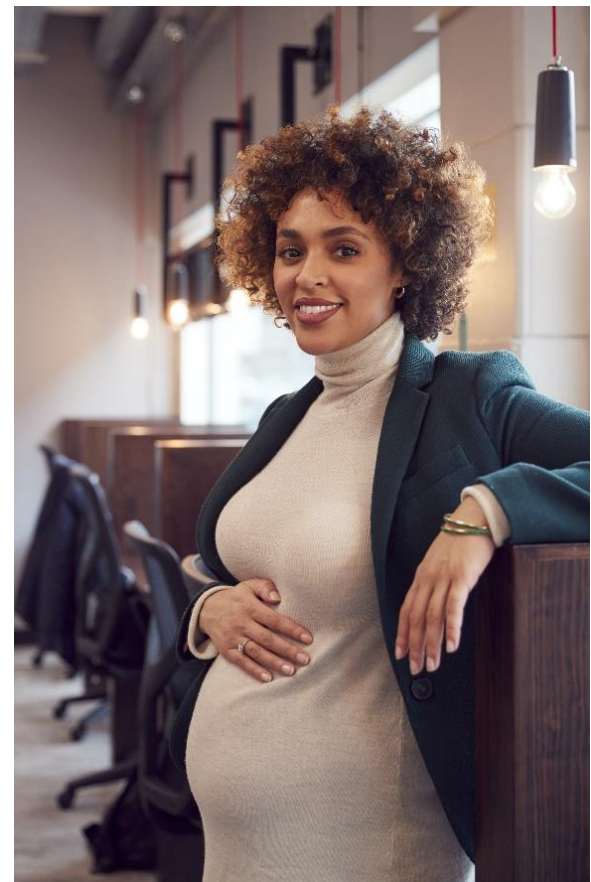


**Health care system and patient:** Asking questions and advocating for your needs are your rights. Your health care team is responsible for understanding and addressing your questions and concerns. You know your body best!

## What Have You Heard About Breastfeeding?

**Directions:** Put a check next to anything you have heard about breastfeeding.

- It's healthiest for the baby
- It's healthier for me
- It is more difficult to spend time away from the baby when breastfeeding
- I am not sure what to do with my other children when I am breastfeeding
- Night feeding doesn't need me to prepare anything
- Breastfeeding can spoil the baby and the baby will be clingier
- Less likely to develop asthma and childhood obesity for my baby
- There is no point in feeding my baby breastmilk after 6 months
- I have heard if I breastfeed in public people will say negative things to me
- Most people can't make enough milk
- Fewer allergies and infections for my baby
- It will help me lose weight
- Breast milk only for the first six months
- Reduce risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- I have experience breastfeeding a baby
- If I breastfeed, I will receive better WIC package
- Breastmilk and formula are the same
- It can reduce the potential for diabetes for my baby



## What Are Your Concerns About Breastfeeding?

**Directions:** Put a check next to any concerns you have heard about breastfeeding.

- Planning to go back to work or school
- Family or partner doesn't want me to
- I smoke or drink
- I take medication
- It may be embarrassing
- I don't think I can make enough milk
- My breasts may sag
- Breastfeeding commonly hurts
- My baby latching
- My baby may not get enough to eat
- The size or shape of my breasts
- I do not know anyone who has breastfed before
- I do not know any resources for breastfeeding
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice to feed your baby?

## Common Questions About Breastfeeding

### ***How will I know if I'm making enough milk?***

A baby's sucking will tell your body to make milk

### ***What supplies will I need for breastfeeding?***

Only you, your baby, and a breast pump

### ***Will it hurt?***

Breastfeeding sometimes hurts, but you can learn how to position the baby on your breasts and ask for help from a lactation consultant



### ***It can be hard to make healthy food choices, what happens to my breastmilk?***

Healthy food choices will help you feel good and your body will still make healthy breastmilk

### ***What if I feel embarrassed breastfeeding in front of others?***

You can go to a private place or cover up while nursing. You can also feed your baby pumped breast milk from a bottle. And you can ask your support partner or friends to support you

### ***Will nursing spoil my baby?***

Nursing builds trust and security between parent and child. You can't spoil a baby by breastfeeding

### ***What if my partner feels left out?***

Have your partner nearby during feedings. Let them do something special to care for you and the baby. After you and the baby have learned how to breastfeed, your partner can feed the breast milk in a bottle

### ***How can I breastfeed if I go back to work or school?***

You can pump milk during breaks and store in a refrigerator. And there are laws that protect mothers who need to pump

### ***What if I smoke?***

Even if you smoke, it's best to breastfeed. Do not smoke around the baby

### ***What about my nipples or breasts?***

All nipples and breasts are different and come in all shapes and sizes. Even with small or inverted nipples breastfeeding can still happen

### ***What if my family questions my choices to breastfeed?***

Be prepared some families will question your decision to breastfeed your baby. Think about benefits you want to share with them and reasons you are choosing to breastfeed. It might be normal in your family not to breastfeed and advice from family members might influence your decision, but remember the decision is yours

### ***What if I take medication?***

Talk with your health care team about the medications you take and what medications you can take while breastfeeding

### ***What if my baby has nipple confusion?***

Most babies can switch back and forth between receiving a bottle to feed and breastfeeding without problems

### ***What do I do when my baby is growing teeth?***

If the baby bites you can calmly remove the baby from the breast and say nothing or say, "You don't want to nurse right now?" and then stop the nursing session for a bit. It may take a few different tries, but your baby will understand that to feed they cannot bite

### ***What's recommended?***

It is recommended that babies are only fed breastmilk for the first six months of life and continue breastfeeding or getting breastmilk for at least the first year. There is no need to put other things in the bottle, like rice cereal. Breastmilk is a full meal by itself.

*Breastfeeding has many benefits, and you know what is best for your baby!*



## Feeding My Baby

A feeding plan is a plan that shares your choices about feeding your baby. It can be used during your birth experience, and with your health care team, support partner or family. It can be important to bring your feeding plan to your birth experience, so everyone knows what your choice is and what is important to you.

### Questions to think about:

*What would help you feel more confident about breastfeeding your baby or feeding your baby breastmilk?*

*What are your reasons to choose not to breastfeed or feeding your baby breastmilk?*

*What are your reasons to choose to breastfeed or feeding your baby breastmilk?*

## Feeding My Baby Plan

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my goal is to feed my baby by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. The benefits of my choice to feed my baby are very important to me and my baby  
and I request that my goal be supported as long as it is medically safe for me and my baby.  
Please, talk with \_\_\_\_\_ who supports my choice to feed my baby this way.

Love,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



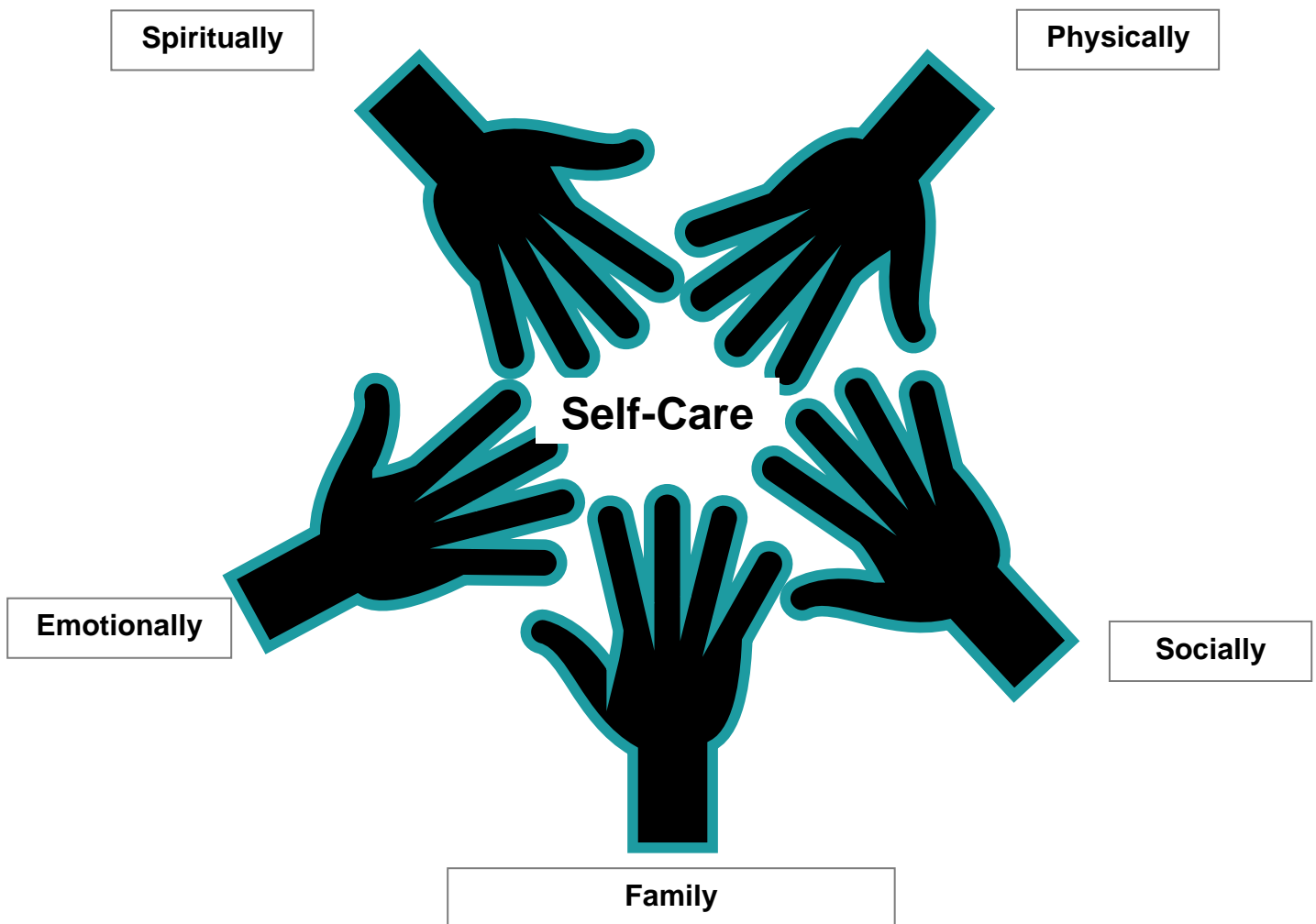
**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choices for your family?

# Self-Care: Taking Care of Myself and My Family

During pregnancy and postpartum, many women and birthing people find that they feel more stress than at other times in their lives. They may feel less in control, cry more easily and may be less patient with themselves and others. Towards the end of pregnancy many people feel anxious as they wait for the arrival of their baby. What is something you can do for a few moments today to take care of yourself.

How can you take care of yourself ...

- Spiritually
- Physically
- Emotionally
- Socially
- Family



# Mind Power

*Check-in: How are you feeling today?*

## Stop, Breathe, Think

### Stop

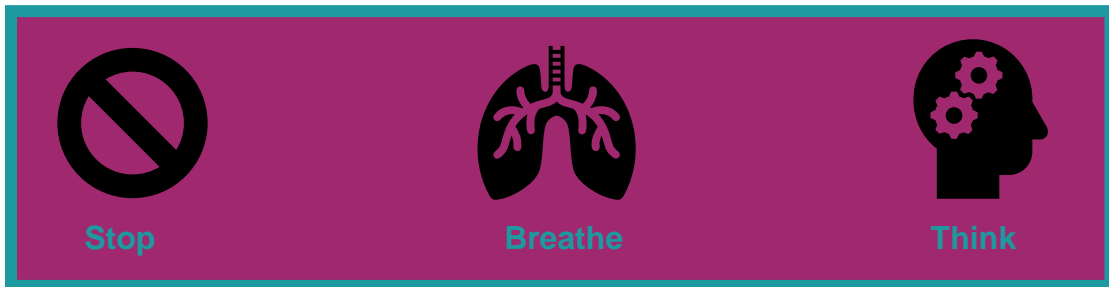
Take a moment to notice your reaction to the situation and how you are feeling. Imagine a big red stop sign in front of you and it has the word STOP on it. Notice the sign, the bright color, the letters or put out your hand to gesture stop and say out loud: STOP.

### Take a Breath

Take a few deep breaths. In through your nose and out through your mouth. Refocus your energy, mind and body and give yourself a moment to take a small break.

### Think

Think about your reaction to the situation and your next steps to calm your mind and body. What can you do? What are you feeling? What is priority? Who can you ask for support?



If taking a deep breath doesn't help to stop thoughts, here are some other options:

- Imagine changing the channel on TV
- Imagine a place you feel relaxed
- Verbally say "go away thoughts"
- Count to 10



# Healthy Me: My Family Now and In the Future

We learn to parent when we are very young from our own experiences as children, but we also develop our own ideas about how to care for babies and children. Now is a good time to think about the kind of family you want for your children, the kind of parent you want to be and with your support partner and family.

## Thinking About My Family

Think about the family you grew up in and complete this sheet. Ask your partner or family member who will be most involved with the care of your baby to also complete the statements. Share your thoughts with each other.

*How did you feel when you found out you were pregnant* \_\_\_\_\_

*One of my favorite things we did together as a family was* \_\_\_\_\_

*The way my caregivers acted toward each other was* \_\_\_\_\_

*My caregiver disciplined me in this way* \_\_\_\_\_

*Good behavior was rewarded with* \_\_\_\_\_

*My experience caring for babies is (check one)* \_\_\_\_\_ *a lot* \_\_\_\_\_ *a little* \_\_\_\_\_  
*none*

*The parts about my family that I want to keep as I raise my child(ren) are* \_\_\_\_\_

*Things I want to change for my own family are* \_\_\_\_\_

*Deciding to move forward, what does the future look like?*  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Responsibilities for My Family

**Directions:** Put a check to show who you think will do the following tasks.

Who will ...	Me	Partner or family member	Both	Unsure
Take care of feeding the baby at night				
Take the baby to health or dental check-ups				
Change diapers				
Bathe the baby				
Feed the baby				
Take care of the baby when he/she is sick				
Find someone or day care to take care of the baby				
Other:				
Decide how to spend money				
Decide on the food we eat				
Decide how we will spend free time				
Work outside the home				
Decide on the number of children				
Decide on our vision for our family				
Decide on condom use				
Have a smoke-free home and car				



# Session 4: Pregnancy and Postpartum Stress

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate when you feel stressed?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate for your postpartum choices?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Body Scan

*Pregnancy:* Pregnancy and Postpartum Stress

*Self-Care:* Advocacy

*Mind Power:* Finding Calmness

*Closing:* What does support/help look like now and in the future?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Intimate Partner Violence

*“You are proof that love before first sight does exist.”*

– Araceli M. Ream

## Body Scan

Sometimes our bodies feel an emotion without our minds knowing how we are feeling and a common reaction to stress, anxiety and trauma is to tense and tighten your body. Body scans can help to bring awareness to areas of your body that feel stressed, anxious, or uncomfortable.

If you feel comfortable, lay down or sit in your seat with your feet planted on the floor. The goal is to bring attention and focus on how different parts of your body are feeling. Sometimes focusing on different parts of your body can be difficult and if you feel uncomfortable at any time you can stop or let someone know.

## From Pregnancy to Parenthood

*You are not alone. You are not to blame.*

*With help, you will be well.*

*-Postpartum Support International*



## Stress during pregnancy

Birthing people, mothers and fathers can experience anxiety and depression before, during and after pregnancy. Anxiety and depression are not something we choose to experience, sometimes it just happens. We can choose how we advocate for support and find tools that help us feel better.

## Depression and anxiety during pregnancy and postpartum

Many birthing people, mothers and fathers experience mild depression within the first two weeks after birth. This can be caused by hormonal changes, lack of sleep, and experiences during childbirth. There is a difference between feeling baby blues/parent stress and postpartum depression.

Signs of mild depression also known as baby blues:

- Trouble concentrating feeling confused or distracted
- Feeling irritable or angry
- Crying often for no reason
- Feeling sad frequently
- Symptoms can come and go
- Lasts less than a month



**What are ways you can take care of yourself during pregnancy**

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**What are ways you can take care of yourself when baby is born?**

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## Pregnancy and Postpartum Depression

Some experience more serious depression and this is different than the baby blues.

There are ways to tell that what you are experiencing is more serious depression:

- ✓ It lasts longer: It lasts longer than 3 weeks
- ✓ It starts later: It could begin weeks or months after birth
- ✓ It feels stronger: It could feel like many different emotions, loneliness or very overwhelmed by parenthood

Signs of pregnancy and postpartum depression:

- ✓ Lack of interest in things
- ✓ Trouble sleeping
- ✓ Changes in appetite or rapid weight loss
- ✓ Loss of energy
- ✓ Restlessness or slow movement
- ✓ Feelings of guilt, fear, worthlessness, or not bonding with baby
- ✓ Headaches, diarrhea, or constipation
- ✓ Difficulty concentrating
- ✓ Lack of arousal feelings
- ✓ Feeling paralyzed or unable to attend to the baby's needs
- ✓ Doubt parenting skills or feel something is wrong with parenting ability



## Have you tried any of these techniques during pregnancy or after birth?

- ✓ Talk with someone about how you feel like your family, friends, health care team
- ✓ Let some chores go until you feel better
- ✓ Ask someone to help with childcare
- ✓ Rest and sleep when the baby rests
- ✓ Sit down and relax
- ✓ Advocate for your needs: How much support do you need? How much rest do you need? How are you feeling?
- ✓ Find resources to help like a doula or support group
- ✓ Talk about depression, anxiety before, during and after pregnancy
- ✓ Take 5 minutes for self-care
- ✓ Call the Primal Scream Line: [212-556-3800](tel:212-556-3800)



**Health care system and patient:** Asking questions and advocating for your needs are your rights. Your health care team is responsible for understanding and addressing your questions and concerns. You know your body best!



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate when you feel stressed?



## Call your healthcare team if you have:

High blood pressure

Bleeding that soaks a maternity pad in an hour or less

Fever of 101F or more

Severe pain in abdomen or pelvis

Deep sadness or depression or thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

Worsening pain, redness, swelling or discharge at the site of your stitches

Foul-smelling vaginal discharge

Pain or redness in the breast with flu-like symptoms (headache, body aches, fever)

Frequent urge to pee and/or burning with urination

Constipation or hemorrhoids that are not helped by over-the-counter remedies

Pain, heat, or redness in one area of your leg or if one leg is more swollen

Severe headaches

Change in vision or dizziness



***Black women are at higher risk of developing preeclampsia.***

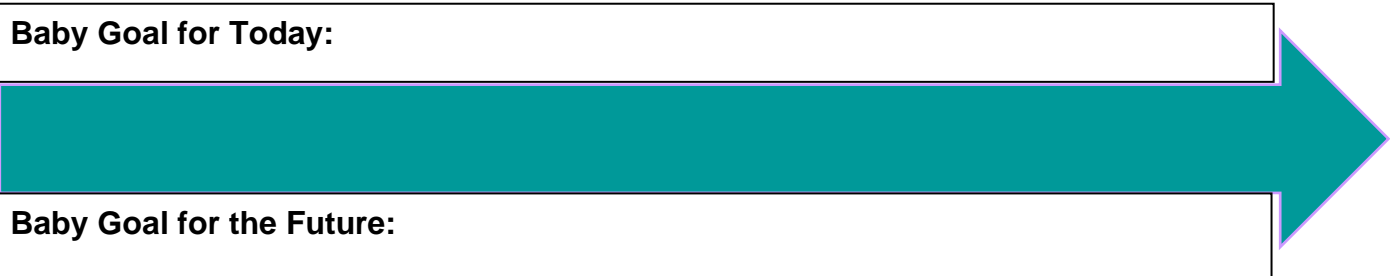
***Preeclampsia is a very serious pregnancy complication that includes high blood pressure and impacts organs like the kidneys.***

***It is also a risk factor for heart disease.***

## Self-Care: Goal Setting Check-In

Goals are things you are hoping to reach. Sometimes goals are hard to achieve, while at other times, goals can be simple to achieve. Goals can be for you, for you as a parent and your baby. Goals can help to find what is most important to you.

**Baby Goal for Today:**



**Baby Goal for the Future:**

**Parent Goal for Today:**



**Parent Goal for the Future:**

**Mind Power Goal for Today:**



**Mind Power Goal for the Future:**

# Mind Power

## Check-in: How are you feeling today?

### Mind Balance

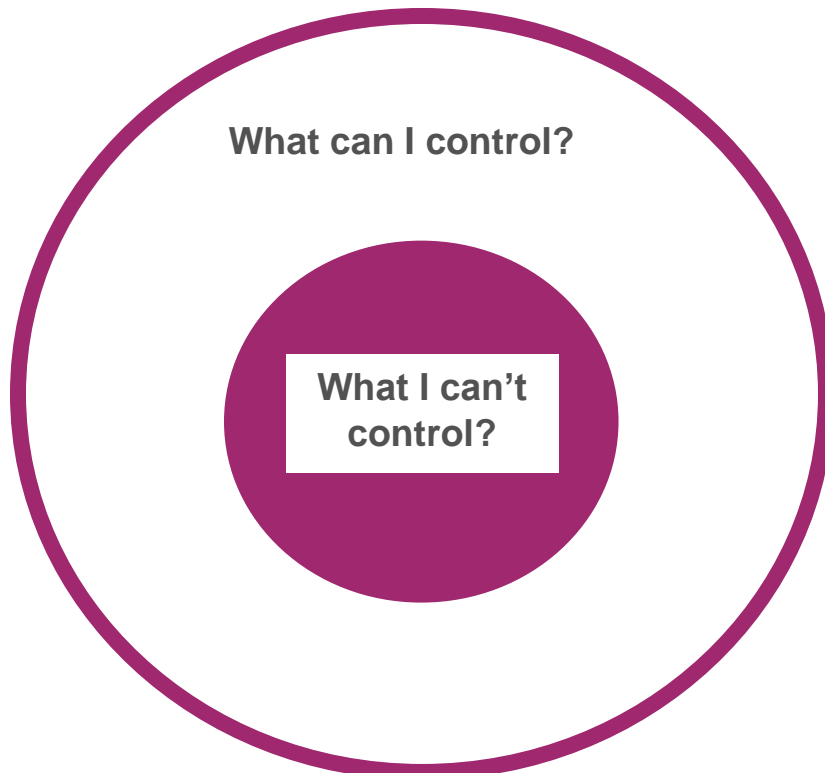
During pregnancy, many people worry about baby, birth, and their health. We have control over many things during pregnancy like taking care of ourselves, our baby, asking for help, finding a doula or support group and many others. There are many things we don't have control over like how our body will react during birth, nausea, the sex of our baby and many others.

**Think of a situation. What can you control in this situation? *Make a list.***

- 
- 
- 

**What can't you control in this situation? *Make a list.***

- 
- 
- 



## Finding Calmness

What does calmness mean to you? This is a snow globe. We can shake the snow globe and the snow goes all around the snow globe. When we stop shaking the snow globe the snow falls to the bottom. When we feel an intense emotion, the snow goes all around the snow globe. When we calm down, the snow starts to fall to the bottom.



Think about a time when you felt parts of your life or thoughts were all over the place. Think about a time when you felt parts of your life or thoughts were calm and relaxed. Before, during and after pregnancy, stress, depression, and anxiety can make it feel like parts of your life or thoughts are all over the place like the snowflakes in the snow globe.

What are self-care practices we could use to let the snowflakes fall and feel less stressed?

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**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your postpartum choices?

# Healthy Me: Information on Intimate Partner Violence

## **What is Intimate Partner Violence?**

- Being forced to have intercourse when you don't want to
- Having no say in financial decisions within the relationship
- Having your partner continue to check up on you
- Being told what to wear, who to see, and how to act
- Being kept at home, or unable to go by yourself
- Manipulation of children
- Being hit or beaten
- Neglect



## **Intimate Partner Violence during Pregnancy**

Sometimes the stress of pregnancy can worsen abusive behaviors or abuse begins during pregnancy

Safety is most important

You and your baby deserve to be safe.

## **Take steps to get help and the support you need**

1. Talk to someone who cares -a good friend, counselor, or health care team member
2. Call the national domestic violence hotline number **1-800-799-7233**
3. Call 911 if you think someone is going to hurt you or your children or someone you know.

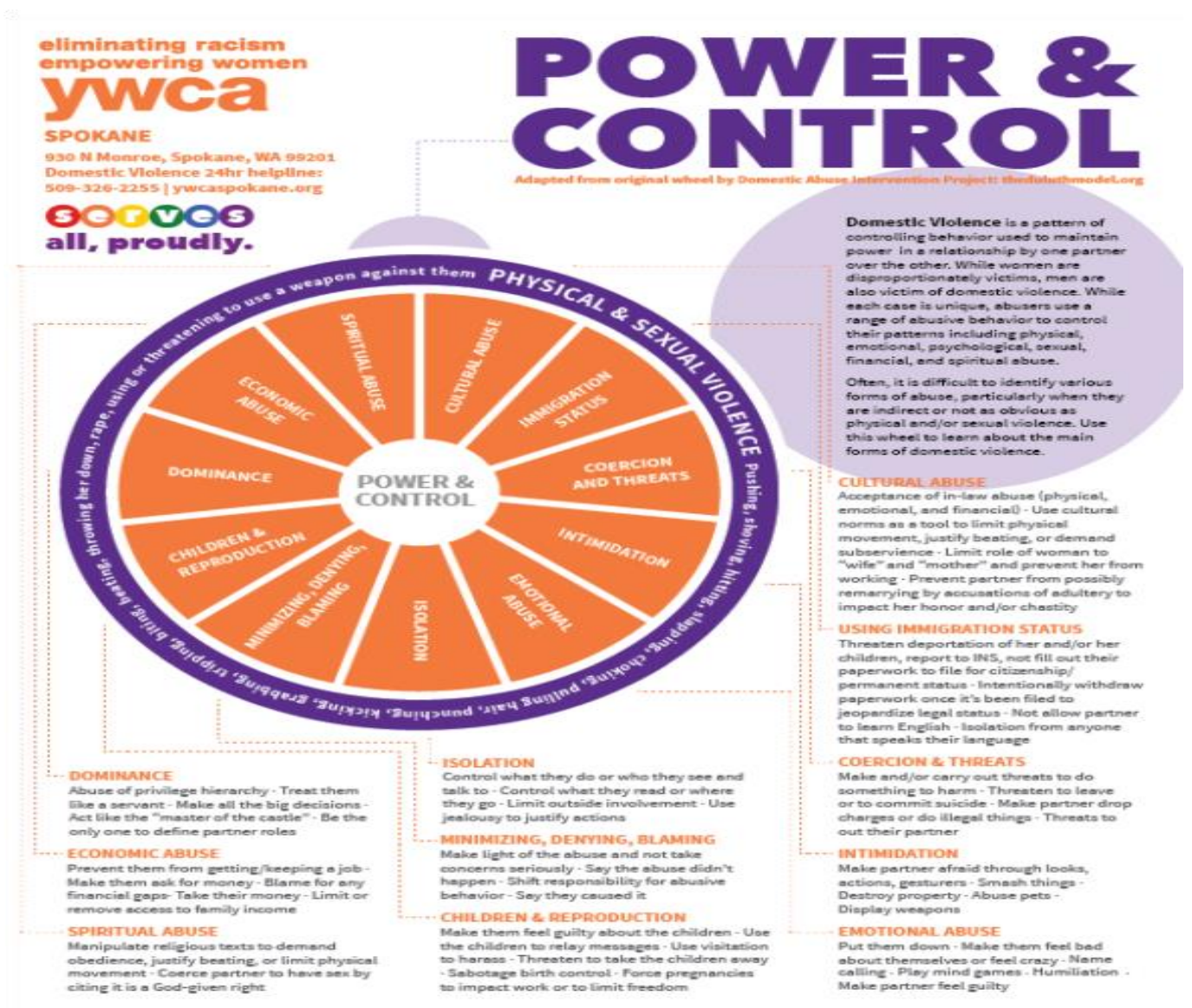
## **Helping Someone in an Abusive Relationship.**

- Even if you are in a healthy relationship, you may know someone who is experiencing abuse. Here are some ways to help them.
- Speak up if you are concerned that something is wrong. Acknowledge that they are in a difficult and scary situation.
- Let them know that you are available to talk and listen. Remind them that they are not alone and that you want to help. Be non-judgmental.



- Help them understand that the behaviors they are experiencing are not normal.
- Remind them that they are a good person who deserves to be treated well and it is NOT their fault their partner is acting this way.
- Remind them that children suffer when there is abuse in the relationship, even if they are not directly being abused.
- Tell them that you are concerned for their safety if nothing changes in the relationship.
- Give them a local or national domestic violence hotline number.
- Stay supportive and keep trying. It's important to support them no matter what they decide, even if you don't agree.

**The Power and Control Wheel:** This wheel helps to think about different strategies and behaviors partners use during intimate partner violence in order to have control and power over the partner





# Session 5: Preparing for Birth

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate for your birth choices?
- 2) How will you use your voice to be kind to yourself?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Belly Breathing

*Pregnancy:* Preterm Labor and Birth

*Self-Care:* Be Kind to Yourself

*Mind Power:* Informed Decision Making

*Closing:* How do I prepare for labor now and in the future?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Advocacy During Birth

*“From the moment I found out I was pregnant; I knew this would be the best journey of my life.”*

- Proud Happy Mama

# Belly Breathing

Belly breathing is deep breathing. Your belly will rise and fall when you take a breath. Belly breathing might feel different now that you are further along in your pregnancy.

Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a deep breath in through your nose and hold for the count of one, two and three. Then let go of your deep breath through your mouth. Continue to place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly. Take a deep breath through your nose, hold for the count of one, two and three and breath out through your mouth.

Belly breathing can be used when you are feeling a lot of emotions, feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or anxious and during birth or after the baby is born. Belly breathing is one strategy to help you feel calm and can be used in a variety of situations.

*Belly Breathing can be helpful before birth,  
during birth and  
after birth*

**Breathe during birth. Practice breathing before you give birth.**

**Contractions will get stronger as labor progresses. Breathe with each contraction.**

**Contractions can happen several weeks before you go into the actual labor. Practice breathing with each contraction.**

**Find when breathing works best for you and your baby. Practice breathing before birth.**

**Stress during birth is real. Take a few moments to breathe.**

## Preterm Labor

- Preterm labor is labor before 37 weeks of pregnancy (3 or more weeks before your due date)
- Babies born early are at risk for life-threatening complications, major illness, and lifelong effects
- Babies born before 37 weeks often need special care in an intensive care nursery (NICU)
- It is not always easy to tell if you are having preterm labor. Many signs of preterm labor feel like some of the normal things that happen in the second half of pregnancy
- Preterm labor is never your fault and is sometimes out of our control even when we try our best to take care of our baby and ourselves. If you have had a baby who has born preterm, let your health care team know

### Signs of Preterm Labor

**Call your health care team if you experience any of these signs:**

- ✓ A sudden gush or constant slow leak of fluid from the vagina
- ✓ Bleeding from the vagina
- ✓ Contractions of the uterus that are 10 minutes apart or closer, with or without pain
- ✓ Cramps like you get when you have your period
- ✓ Concerns about baby movement
- ✓ Low, dull, or constant backache
- ✓ Pelvic pressure
- ✓ An increase or change in discharge from the vagina (watery, mucous or bloody)
- ✓ A feeling that “something is not right”

## Timing your contractions

- Frequency: The time from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next contraction
- Length (duration): The time from the beginning of the contraction to the end of the contraction

### If you think that you're having contractions these things will help you know if they are true or false labor:

- Drink 3 - 4 glasses of water
- Lie down on your side and time the contractions
- Relax with belly breathing
- Take a bath or shower to relax

## How can your support people support you?

How can support persons support you during birth?

How can support persons support you during pregnancy?

Who do you want with you during birth?

What if I don't have support during pregnancy or birth?

How can a doula support me during pregnancy, birth and postpartum?

## Every pregnancy and birth is different...

There is no right or wrong way to birth. Birth is hard, painful and you will feel many different emotions.

### Signs of Labor: Consistent Contractions

- ✓ When contractions last 60 seconds or more, come every 3 to 5 minutes, and get stronger, it usually means the labor has begun
- ✓ Labor contractions do not go away
- ✓ They continue even when your activity changes (resting, walking, relaxing in water, drinking water, lying down)
- ✓ Each contraction is strong enough to make you pay attention and it is difficult to talk through it
- ✓ The water around the baby (amniotic fluid) is in a sack and may break open before contractions or during labor.
- ✓ You may feel a gush or small trickle of fluid. You may also notice a wet spot on your bed. The amniotic fluid should be clear or pinkish. Call your provider or birth facility if it is colored yellow or green, your baby needs to be checked right away.



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your birth choices?

# Self-Care: Checking in With Kindness

Self-care is about taking care of ourselves. These are examples of when we become too stressed and need to take extra time to take care of ourselves.

**Compassion Fatigue:** Tiredness that can come from stresses of caring for others

**Secondary trauma:** Change in emotions and/or behaviors because of listening to a traumatizing event experienced by another

**Burnout:** Is an example of chronic stress and can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, negative attitude on life and a lot of difficulty caring for others.

Being kind to ourselves is a form of self-care and it might not come naturally. Sometimes, we may be caring to others around us, but don't take the time to be kind and caring to ourselves.

*Self-care check-in's:* What are nice things I can say about myself?

- 
- 
- 
- 

*Self-care check-in's:* What are things I do be kind to myself?

- 
- 
- 
- 



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice to be kind to yourself?



# Mind Power

## Check-in: How are you feeling today?

### Informed Decision Making

We all feel stressed, irritable and overwhelmed sometimes. Strong emotions can influence how we make decisions. Mind power activities can help to focus your mind and slow your heart rate so you can think about what is happening, feel what is happening and be present in your feelings in order to approach the experience calmly.

Using **S.O.L.V.E.D** can help thinking through decisions and help to focus on a plan.

**S.O.L.V.E.D** can help with increase feelings of control and being able to organize decision-making.

**S**pecific Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

**O**pen your mind to solutions. What are possible solutions?

- 
- 
- 

**L**ist the positive and negative of each solution:

What is *positive*?

What is *negative*?

**V**erify the best solution. Make a choice: \_\_\_\_\_

**E**nact the solution: What steps can you take?

**D**ecide if your solution worked. What went well? What could be improved?

## Healthy Me: Advocacy during Birth

In some birth settings there will be tests and procedures for parent during pregnancy and birth. Below is a list of questions to consider asking before determining if you want any test or procedure to be completed on yourself.

### Questions to consider before agreeing to any test or procedure:

- ✓ What is the purpose of this test?
- ✓ Where does the test take place?
- ✓ Who will be doing the test?
- ✓ How will we use the information from the test?
- ✓ What are the alternatives to the test?
- ✓ What are the possible side effects of the test?
- ✓ Can I have this test done at a late date?
- ✓ Which tests are recommended to keep me and my baby strong and healthy?
- ✓ What should my doctor know about me before the test begins?
- ✓ What triggers might I experience?
- ✓ What is the plan if I become triggered?
- ✓ How and when will I get my results?
- ✓ What will the results mean?



# Session 6: Preparing for Birth

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate for your birth choices?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate for what is comfortable and safe for you?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Positive Self-Talk Power

*Pregnancy:* Birth Experience

*Self-Care:* Taking Care of Myself During Birth

*Mind Power:* Mind, Body and Behavior Connection and Birth

*Closing:* How do I prepare for baby now and in the future?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Asking for Help

*“Being pregnant was very much like falling in love. You are so open.”*

- Beyoncé

## Positive Self-Talk Power

Positive self-talk can help to lower stress, anxiety, and depression. The goal of positive self-talk is to be kind, gentle and forgive ourselves. Try to think about what is good about you. Positive self-talk includes accepting the stress, pain and fear you might be feeling and check in with our feelings to identify why we talk to ourselves in a negative way.

### What are positive things you say to yourself?

*I have the courage to try something new!*

*I can make mistakes and it will be okay!*

*I am strong enough to ask for help!*



*I will keep trying!*

*I am worth it!*

*I love myself!*

*What else can you say to yourself?*

# Birth Experience

There are a lot of decisions to make as you get ready for the birth of your baby. If you already decided something, write it down. What questions do you have about giving birth?

## **Early Labor**

- 1) What will I do?
- 2) Who will be with me?
- 3) When will I call my health care team?

## **Getting Ready for Birth**

- 1) Where will my birth happen?
- 2) Who will be with me?

## **Other children**

- 1) Where will they be?
- 2) When will they meet the baby?

## **Birth**

- 1) What comfort measures will I use?
- 2) Do I want a written birth plan?
- 3) Does my support person(s) know my plan?
- 4) Does my health care team know my plan?



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your birth choices?

## Types of Birth

Many birthing people are ready to see the baby and pregnancy to end and birth can bring up a range of emotions.

Black birthing people experience a huge difference in health care systems responses to pain, pain management, treatment, birthing and care options. What have you heard about types of birth and the birthing experience? What have you talked with your health care team about?

**Health care system and patient:** Asking questions and advocating for your needs are your rights. Your health care team is responsible for understanding and addressing your questions and concerns. You know your body best!

## What have you heard about vaginal births?

### Vaginal Birth

- Once your cervix (tissue connecting the uterus and vagina) is completely open, your baby moves from the uterus through the vagina and is born.
- Pushing often begins spontaneously when the baby's head presses on the pelvic floor muscles.
- Usually there is time before you need to push as the contractions will keep moving the baby through your body.



### First Stage:

**Pre-Labor:** Contractions are usually far apart and are not regularly spaced.

**Early Labor:** Contractions become more regular and closer together.

**Active Labor:** Contractions continue to get stronger, more regular, and closer together.

**Transition:** The contractions are long and strong.

### Second Stage:

The cervix is open (dilated) and baby is moving from the uterus into the birth canal (vagina). You and your health care team will work together to start pushing.

This stage ends with the birth of your baby.

### Third Stage:

The uterus contracts to push out the placenta.

When baby is born you can choose to have baby on your chest for skin-to-skin.

### Fourth Stage:

Recovery

Sleep, spend time with your baby and support people, eat and take care of yourself



## What have you heard about C-sections?

### Cesarean Birth (C-section)

- C-sections are sometimes needed during emergencies and there are also scheduled C-sections if baby or birthing person is at risk. This is a surgery to deliver your baby through a cut in your abdomen and uterus.
- You can still breastfeed, have skin to skin contact with your baby and delay cutting baby's umbilical cord.
- As with any surgery, some risks can be blood loss, infection, and pain after surgery. You and your health care team will talk about C-sections and your choices.

## What have you heard about VBACs?

### Vaginal birth after Cesarean (VBAC)

- Having a vaginal delivery after a previous C-section is a safe, healthy option for most birthing people.
- Some of the things that should be considered include:
  - Does your hospital support VBAC?
  - The type and number of C-sections you have had before
  - The reason for your prior C-section
  - Whether you had a previous vaginal birth
  - If you go into labor spontaneously or not
  - C-section is a major surgery

**Childbirth is different for each person.**

## What have you heard about pain and childbirth?

**How do you want your pain responded to, managed, and listened to?**

## Pain management

The most frequent medications used are narcotics and epidurals. Discuss the options for medication with your health care team.



### 1) Narcotic Pain Medications

- Small doses are given through an IV in the arm or hand.
- This helps take the edge off the pain of contractions, but you still feel them.
- You usually have to stay in bed, have IV fluids and a continuous fetal monitoring.

### 2) Epidural Anesthesia

- Medication flows through a small plastic tube placed in the lower spine.
- This takes away the feeling of contractions and causes more loss of feeling in the abdomen and legs.
- You will have an IV, urine tube and must stay in bed with continuous fetal monitoring.

## Birth of Baby

Most times, babies can be put to skin to skin right on a parent's chest afterbirth. Your baby's heart rate and breathing become regular with skin to skin. There are a lot of benefits of skin to skin for parent and baby.

While you are taking some breaths and first holding your baby, a few things will be happening:

- Your baby's heart rate, respiration, muscle tone, reflex and cry are checked. This shows how well your baby is adapting to life outside the womb.
- Once the cord has stopped pulsating the placenta can take up to 30 minutes to deliver.
- The baby is usually ready to start feeding.
- Your health care team will check closely with their hands on your belly to be sure your uterus stays firm to prevent heavy bleeding. Deep pressure is needed to feel the uterus and keep it firm. This needs to be done frequently in the first hour or so and will be uncomfortable.

## *This is my birth choice*

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my goal is to give birth by

\_\_\_\_\_.

The benefits of my choice are very important to me and my baby and I request that my goal be supported as long as it is medically safe for me and my baby. Please, talk with

\_\_\_\_\_ who supports my choice to give birth this way.

### After Baby is Born

- This is the first few hours after birth when you and your baby are adjusting to the changes you both are going through.
- How will you feed your baby? This is your choice.
- How will you take care of yourself? This is your choice.



# Self-Care: Taking Care of Myself During Birth

You know your body best! While giving birth pay attention to signs from your body and baby. Consider the items listed below in choosing how you will take care of yourself during birth.

*Have you tried any of these ways to take care of yourself?*

**Move your body** by rocking, swaying and walking.

**Imagine a place where you can relax.** Think about what you see, smell, hear and feel in this place.

**Bring your support person.**

**Focus your mind** on your breathing or repeating a word, phrase, prayer, or sound.

**Positive self-talk.** You can do this.

**Ask for touch, a hug or a massage.**

**Deep breathing.** Remember our belly breathing from earlier? This could be a time to use it.

**Vocalizing** can be helpful during birth and is normal.

**Listening to music.**



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for what feels most comfortable and safe for you?

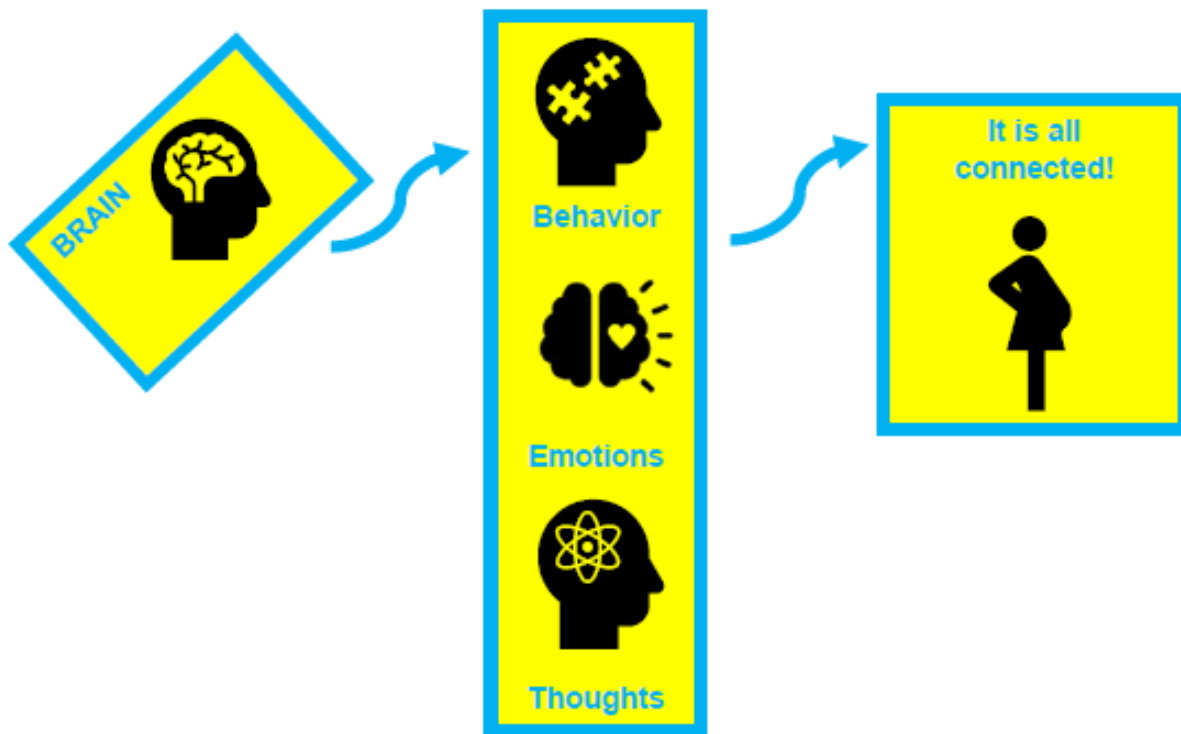
# Mind Power

## Check-in: How are you feeling today?

### Mind, Body and Behavior Connection and Birth

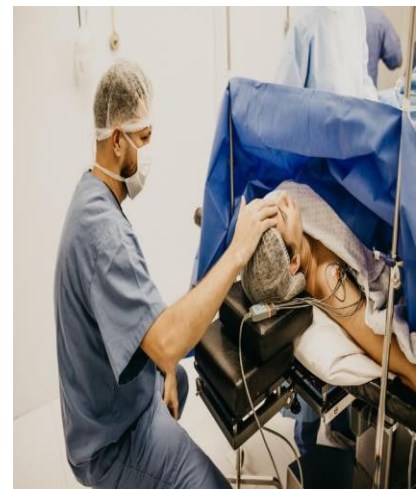
Our mind, body and behavior are all connected. Our thoughts, emotions and attitudes can influence our body. All bodies react differently, and we can have emotional reactions to people, places, or things that we might not even be aware of or know why we are reacting.

The physical pain of birth, the emotions of birth, such as fear, anxiety and excitement can impact your thoughts, emotions, and body.



### Ways to check with your mind and body during birth:

- ✓ *How am I behaving?*
- ✓ *How am I feeling?*
- ✓ *What am I thinking?*
- ✓ *How is my body feeling?*





# Healthy Me: Information on Asking for Help

How would you ask for help?

What would you say?

Who can you ask for support?

Sometimes we ask for help and still do not receive it. During your baby's first days, it is easy to get overwhelmed, scared, frustrated and tired. When this happens, what tools can you use to help take care of yourself?





# Session 7: Family Vision

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice to have sex or not have sex?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate for your family choices?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Mindful Listening

*Pregnancy:* Vision for Your Family

*Self-Care:* Advocacy and Postpartum Depression

*Mind Power:* Stop, Breath, Think and Postpartum

*Closing:* What resources do I need for baby and me now and in the future?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Attachment

“You are pregnant, and you are powerful. You are bold and you are beautiful. Go forward in your boldness, in your beauty and in your contentedness.”

– Anonymous

## Mindful Listening

Everyone wants to be listened to and feel like they are heard. There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing just happens and does not require us to concentrate. We get less information when we only hear. Listening is something you choose to do by actively paying attention to the speaker, by watching their body language, facial expressions, the tone they are using and how loud they are speaking. By actively listening, we can show our friends and family we are listening to them and build empathy.

Emotions have a big impact on when and how we listen. When we have a lot of emotions it can be harder to listen. Mindful listening can help us listen even when we have a lot of emotions.



## Family Vision

What is your vision for your family?

---

***Draw a picture of your family:***

## *Do you want to have another baby?*

### *When do you want to have another baby?*

### *Is birth control important to you?*

- After the birth of your baby, you will ovulate and be able to get pregnant before your first period.
- Ovulation (release of the egg) starts about halfway through the cycle -12 to 16 days after you have your first period.
- It is important to have a plan for preventing pregnancy within the first 3 weeks after your baby is born. You are fertile after giving birth.
- It is helpful to keep track of your periods on the calendar or use a free phone app.

## **What's recommended?**

Spacing children at least 1 ½ to 2 years apart is recommended to:

- Help women regain their nutritional status and a healthy weight
- Avoid the increased risk for preterm birth. Pregnancy within six months has a 40% higher risk of preterm birth and 61% risk of low birth weight



## Healthy Relationships

Part of being safe and healthy is about you and your relationships.

**Directions:** Read the statements below and choose the answer that best describes your situation.

**My partner and I can talk about sex**

Yes          No          Unsure

**I can talk to my partner about things I like and don't like during sex**

Yes          No          Unsure

**I feel comfortable having sex while pregnant**

Yes          No          Unsure

**I need more information about my reproductive rights**

Yes          No          Unsure

**I feel sex with my partner is pleasurable for me**

Yes          No          Unsure



**I am afraid that if I do not have sex with my partner, they will leave me**

Yes          No          Unsure

**I think my partner and I could be sexually satisfied engaging in other intimate behaviors**

Yes          No          Unsure

**I ask my partner for consent before engaging in any sexual activity**

Yes          No          Unsure



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice to have sex or not have sex?

## What is consent?

Consent is giving permission and actively agreeing to participate in any sexual activity. Even in a relationship consent can be given and taken away at any time and still respecting the person even if they say “yes” or “no.”

Asking permission and directly name what you want consent for

Do you feel comfortable with \_\_\_\_\_?  
How do you feel about this?

Ask the person about their preferences before asking for consent

Not holding a grudge when consent is changed even in mid act

Talk about boundaries before asking for consent

Allow time for the person to respond to your ask for consent

# Sexual Decision-Making During Pregnancy and Beyond

## Explicit Consent

You have the choice to say yes or no without explaining your choice!

Consent can be given or taken away at any time even if it's mid act!

- Intercourse can be a positive and healthy part of our lives if it is explicitly consensual
- There is no shame or blame in our explicitly consensual choices
- Solo sex can be pleasurable and shared with a partner





## Sex During Pregnancy

### ***During pregnancy...***

It's okay to have sex throughout your pregnancy unless you are bleeding or having contractions.

### ***During pregnancy...***

Many couples find ways to pleasure each other that don't involve intercourse, especially as the baby gets bigger.

### ***During pregnancy...***

Use a condom for protection against sexually transmitted infections. Get tested for STIs regularly, even when in a partnered relationship.

### ***During early labor...***

Do not allow anything in the vaginal canal, but clitoral and nipple stimulation can take place.

## **What are ways you can protect yourself from pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases?**

Deciding how to prevent sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy can be a difficult or easy decision. There are a lot of options. Think about what has worked before and what has not worked.



## Choosing the right Contraceptive for you!

There are many contraceptive choices for you to choose from and every option is not right for everyone. Consider the list below in choosing which one is right for you.

**Directions: Circle the ones you've used, plan to use, or want more information about.**

Abstinence (no sex)

Vasectomy

Tubal ligation

Implant

Intrauterine device (IUD)

Vaginal ring

Birth control patch

Birth control pills

Depo-Provera shot

Natural family planning

Diaphragm

Vaginal cream

Condoms -female

Condoms -male

Withdrawal (pulling out)

Emergency birth control

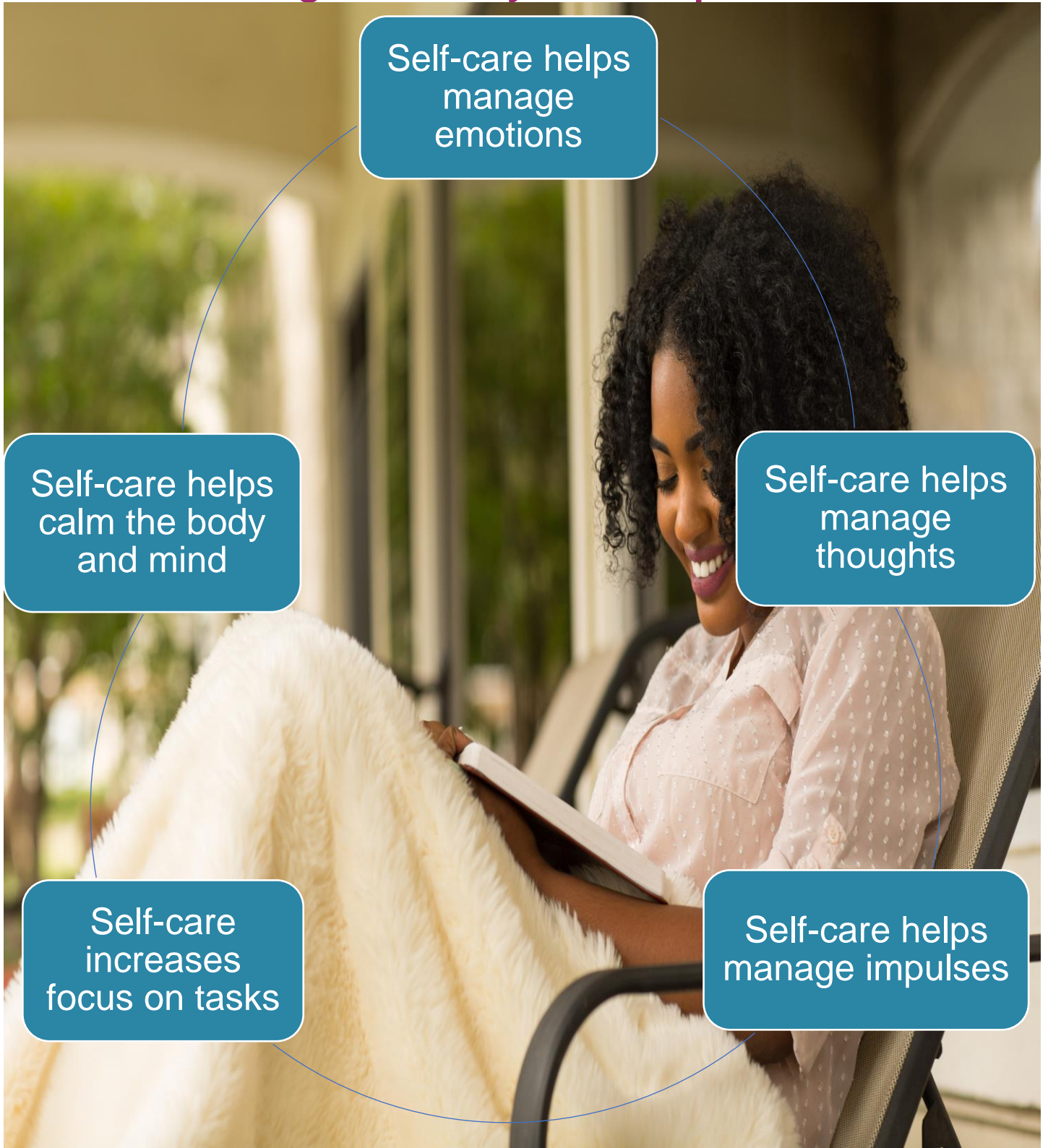
Abortion

Other



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your family choices?

## Self-Care: Taking Care of Myself is Important



Self-care helps manage emotions

Self-care helps calm the body and mind

Self-care helps manage thoughts

Self-care increases focus on tasks

Self-care helps manage impulses

## *Self-Care through relaxation is important because...*



# Mind Power

## Check-in: How are you feeling today?

### Stop, Breathe, Think and Postpartum

Do you ever feel flustered, heart racing, sweating, constant worry, quick to anger, or just powerless: Stop, Breathe, and Think. What is the priority, what can wait, and what can you ask for help with.

#### Stop

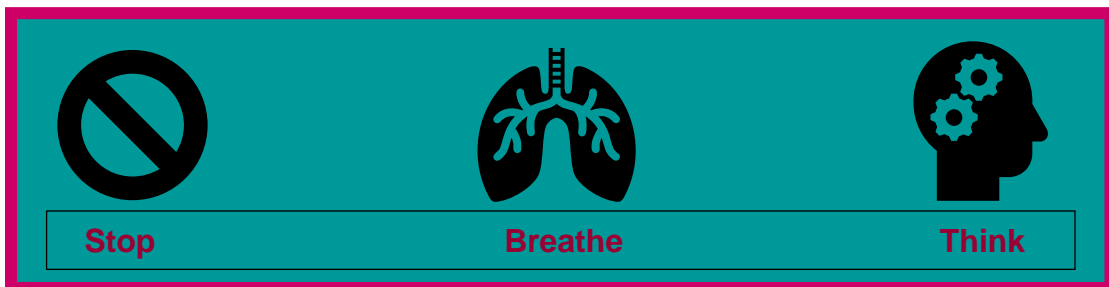
Take a moment to notice your reaction to the situation and how you are feeling. Imagine a big red stop sign in front of you and it has the word STOP on it. Notice the sign, the bright color, the letters or put out your hand to gesture stop and say out loud: STOP.

#### Take a Breath

Take a few deep breaths. In through your nose and out through your mouth. Refocus your energy, mind and body and give yourself a moment to take a small break.

#### Think

Think about your reaction to the situation and your next steps to calm your mind and body. What can you do? What are you feeling? What is priority? Who can you ask for support?



### Stress can increase when your baby comes home because:

- Lack of sleep
- Baby crying
- Learning signs of what your baby needs and when they want to eat, sleep or a diaper change is needed
- It can be difficult to trust yourself and your parenting skills
- Supporting your partner and taking care of your home





# Healthy Me: Information on Attachment

## Bond with baby

When you respond to baby, they respond to you and learn to trust, feel safe and attach to you.

- Look baby in their eyes
- Look at the mirror together
- Skin to skin
- Respond to baby's crying
- Stop, Think and Breathe when you feel overwhelmed
- Hold, cuddle, rock and kiss
- Do something to comfort baby
- Hold your baby as much as possible
- Talk to your baby softly
- Respond to their smile
- Laugh with them
- Remind them you are here for them
- You can't spoil a baby



## Infants need protection and comfort!

### Parents can provide protection and comfort!

### Support people can provide protection and comfort!

Bonding, protection, and comfort is needed throughout the first few years of life and beyond. The simplest way to do this is to hold your baby as much as possible. It is critically important for the physical and emotional health of the child.

## You cannot spoil a baby!

When you hold your baby, it helps your baby get to know you and helps them use all their senses: touch, sight, smell, hearing, and taste. Remember you carried your child for months and they are brand new to the world, so it makes sense that they still want to be carried, held, and comforted.

There are many kinds of swings, wraps, and carriers to keep your baby close, give them good support, and leave your hands free. You and your partner can take turns holding or wearing the baby throughout the day, using time to touch, talk, sing, and interact with your baby in many ways.

### Brothers and sisters and attachment

Having a new baby in your family is an adjustment for everyone. Attachment to brothers and sisters can help with peer relationships and can be a source of comfort.



## How will you help other children get ready for the new baby?



### **Ways to help brothers and sisters get ready for the new baby:**

- Make big changes early, such as toilet training or stopping bottles
- Let your child help you prepare for baby
- Celebrate them being an older sister or brother
- Talk and read books about having a new baby
- Plan activities for the child to look forward to after the baby is born
- Plan activities for when you are feeding the baby

# Session 8: Baby and Parent Come Home

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate for how you are feeling?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate for taking care of yourself when baby comes home?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

R.A.I.N.S.

*Pregnancy:* Baby and My First Days

*Self-Care:* Self-Care and a Newborn

*Mind Power:* Finding Calmness

*Closing:* How will I bond with my baby?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Calling Your Healthcare Team for Parent and Baby

*"What good parents instinctively feel like doing for their babies is usually best after all."*

-Benjamin Spock

## R.A.I.N.S.

R.A.I.N.S. is one way to practice self-love. R.A.I.N.S. can help name the emotion you are feeling, how the event made you feel and bring more self-awareness to our emotions, behaviors, and thoughts.

Especially as your newborn grows, you are their “emotion coaches” and it is important for you and your baby to be able to identify the emotions you are both feeling.

### R: Recognize when a strong emotion or thought is present

- ✓ Listen to your body
- ✓ Ask yourself: What is going on?
- ✓ Trust that you know yourself best
- ✓ Self-love instead of self-judge

### A: Allow yourself to experience the emotion or thought

- ✓ Pause and relax
- ✓ Ask yourself: Can I take a moment?
- ✓ Take a deep breath
- ✓ Self-love instead of self-judge



### I: Investigate with kindness how the emotion or thought is making you feel

- ✓ I can think about why I am feeling this way even if it feels awkward
- ✓ Ask yourself: What is happening? How does my mind, spirit, and body feel?
- ✓ I can try to understand why my feelings are painful
- ✓ Self-love instead of self-judge

### N: Non-identify and separate the emotion or thought from the situation

- ✓ I am aware and can feel my emotions
- ✓ Ask yourself: How do I heal?
- ✓ I am aware of my reaction to the situation
- ✓ Self-love instead of self-judge

### S: Self-Compassion

- ✓ I love myself
- ✓ Ask yourself: How can I be kind to myself?
- ✓ Liberation
- ✓ Self-love instead of self-judge

# Baby and My First Days

Think about which topics are most important to you.

**Directions:** Shade in the circles in front of the topics do you want to discuss?

- What is happening to my body?
- What do I eat after baby is born?
- Exercise after pregnancy
- First days at home with a newborn
- Self-care
- Parenting
- Infant development and learning
- Getting other children ready for the baby
- Vision for my family
- Feeling stress and overwhelmed
- Transportation
- Feeling safe
- Health care appointments
- Sleep
- Oral health: Care of teeth and gums
- Family relationships
- Spouse/support partner relationship
- Questions about sex
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol/drug use after baby is born
- Coping with past pregnancy loss/complications with pregnancy
- Who do I call for an emergency?
- Mental wellness: how I think, feel, and act
- Preparing home for baby
- Legal services/Child support
- Anything else? \_\_\_\_\_

Taking care of a new baby is a challenge, joy and overwhelming for any parent, whether it is your first baby or your last.

**How will you take care of yourself when baby comes home?**

## Safe Sleep: Preventing SIDS

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is when a healthy baby unexpectedly dies during sleep. It is most common during the first six months of life. The cause of SIDS is often unknown, but there are things you can do to reduce the risk of SIDS for your baby.

- Always put your baby to sleep on their back
- Breastfeed your baby if you can
- Go to all baby's medical appointments
- Put them to sleep in a pack and play or crib with a firm mattress
- Overheating can cause SIDS
- Do not allow smoking around your baby
- Do not put pillows, blankets, crib bumpers or stuffed animals in the crib while sleeping



## Safe Feeding: Feeding your baby

You have choices on what to feed your baby and there are ways to keep your baby safe while feeding your baby. It is normal for a baby to want to eat every 3-4 hours, which means you may not get much sleep in the first few weeks.



- Always check the bottle to be sure it's not too hot. You can test it on the back of your hand.
- Warm bottles in a bottle warmer, under warm water or use the stove to warm up liquid.
- Make sure to burp your baby frequently to help ease digestion.
- Do not use a microwave to warm a bottle because it may heat unevenly and can burn your baby's mouth.
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle.
- Do not add anything to breastmilk or formula because it can cause indigestion and discomfort. This includes rice cereal in the bottle, which can be a choking hazard.
- Do not give your babies solid food during the first six months as it can harm their digestive track.

## Oral Health: Care of Teeth and Gums

Oral health is very important for babies. Thrush, sores, and infections in the mouth happen and there are ways to prevent them:

- Wipe baby's gums with a cloth each day
- Start brushing when the first tooth appears
- Clean bottles, nipples, and pacifiers thoroughly
- Do not put your baby to bed with a bottle



## My First Days Home

Recovering after birth can happen in many ways and some discomforts are normal.

Signs you need to call your health care team: Fever over 100.4F, discharge or pain that doesn't go away or gets worse around C-section cut or perineal tear, pain in your belly, pain in your lower back or side, needing to pee often, vaginal discharge that smells bad and high blood pressure.

### C-Section is major surgery and may take longer to recover from

- As much as you can avoid going up and down stairs
- Keep baby supplies close to you and baby
- Don't lift anything heavier than your baby
- Don't take a bath
- Rest when your baby rests
- Ask your health care team about pain medicines and how it will affect feeding your baby
- Drink a lot of water
- Possible vaginal bleeding
- Possible passage of blood clots



### Vaginal birth or VBAC

- Vaginal soreness or discomfort
- Occasional vaginal bleeding
- Possible passage of blood clots
- Rest when your baby rests
- Drink a lot of water

### Planning for Mom

How will I take care of myself: \_\_\_\_\_

When are my postpartum checkups: \_\_\_\_\_

What other appointments do I need to go to: \_\_\_\_\_

Who should I call if there is an emergency: \_\_\_\_\_

## Choices Before Baby is Born

There are a lot of choices to make before baby is born. Do you want to involve your support people in these decisions?

### *Choices for Baby*

Baby's healthcare team

What will you feed baby?

Immunizations

Circumcision

Childcare

Where will baby sleep?

What baby supplies do I need?

How will I bring baby home?



### *Resources to help when baby is home*

*Family and Friends*

*Nurse Family Partnership*

*Saint Louis Crisis Nursery*

*Nurses for Newborns*

*Prenatal Group*

*St. Louis Area Diaper Bank*

*Helping Hand Me Downs*

*Postpartum Doula*



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for how you are feeling?

## Baby's Health Care Team

You will visit your baby's health care team regularly in the first few weeks and months for checkups and immunizations.

Questions to ask when choosing your baby's pediatric care:

### Convenience

- Where is the office?
- What are the office hours?
- How long does it take to get to an appointment?
- Does that office run on time or are there long waits?

### Care for your baby

- Can you see the same health care team each time?
- How long will the health care team be with the practice?
- Do they have health care team members who are the same race/ethnic/cultural background as you or your baby?
- How much time is allowed for visits?
- Is there support for breastfeeding or other forms of feeding?

### Coverage and cost

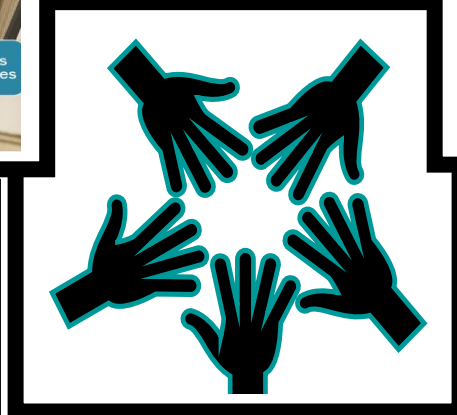
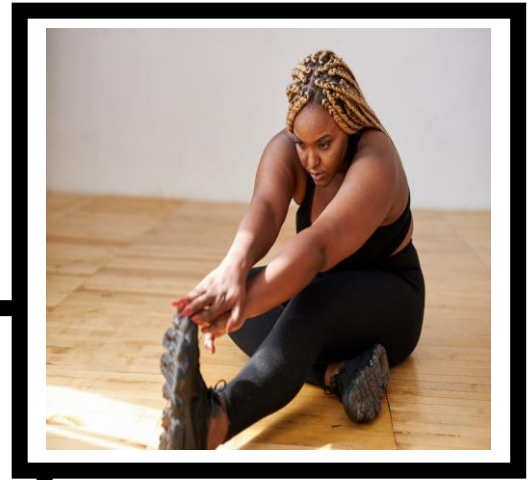
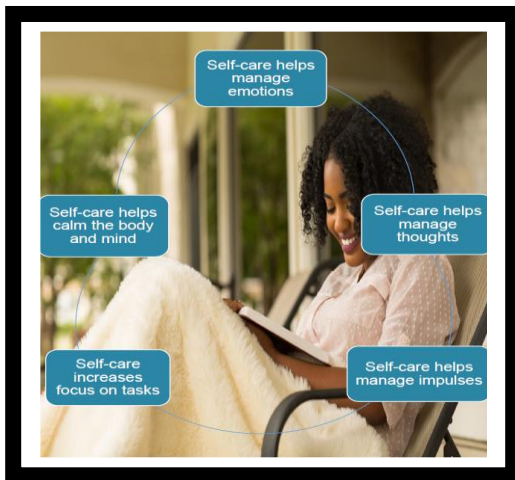
- Do they take your insurance?
- Will a member of the health care team from the office be able to see your baby after birth?
- Who do you call when there is an emergency?
- What hospital do they use?
- Is the office open in the evening or on the weekend?
- Is there a way to reach my baby's health care team when the office is closed?



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for taking care of yourself when baby comes home?

# Self-Care and a Newborn

Here are 6 self-care strategies that you have already tried during group. You can use any of these strategies to help reduce your stress level. How did they work for you?

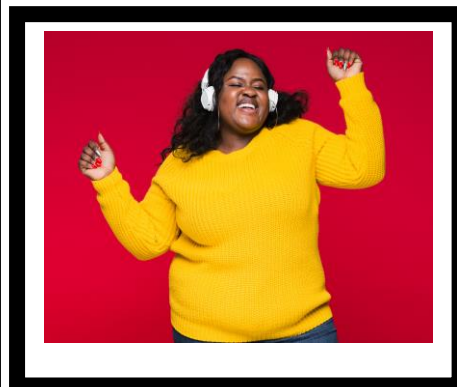


## Self-care check-in's:

What are nice things I can say about myself?

## Self-care check-in's:

What are things I do be kind to myself?



### How will you take care of yourself during birth?

**Move your body** by rocking, swaying and walking.

**Imagine a place where you can relax.** Think about what you see, smell, hear and feel in this place.

**Bring your support person.**

**Focus your mind** on your breathing or repeating a word, phrase, prayer, or sound.

**Positive self-talk.** You can do this.

**Ask for touch, a hug or a massage.**

**Deep breathing.** Remember our belly breathing from earlier? This could be a time to use it.

**Vocalizing** can be helpful during birth and is normal.

**Listening to music.**

# Mind Power

## Check-in: How are you feeling today?

### Finding Calmness

What does calmness mean to you? It is normal to feel many different emotions during pregnancy and after birth. Your new baby needs a lot of care, attention and you are going through many changes.

We can have positive thoughts and negative thoughts. Sometimes our negative thoughts create “inner rules” we think we must follow. These thoughts can influence how we feel and cause stress, anxiety and trouble expressing ourselves. By learning about our negative thought patterns, it can help to express ourselves and focus on more positive aspects of being a new parent.



There are six common negative thought patterns: All or Nothing Thinking, Catastrophizing, Cutting the Positive, Labeling, Personalization and Mind Reading.

**All or Nothing Thinking:** Viewing situation on one extreme.

Example: I am not good enough because I am late to appointments.

**Catastrophizing:** The worst possible outcome is expected.

Example: I am at home on a Saturday night because no one wants to be my friend.

**Mind reading:** Thinking you know what others are thinking.

Example: My house is a mess so people must think I am a lazy person.

**Cutting the positive:** Thinking that good things that happen to you do not mean anything.

Example: Someone told me they loved me, but they were just being nice.

**Labeling:** Giving a label to something or someone without knowing background information.

Example: They think I am not good enough.

**Personalization:** Viewing behaviors of others has something to do with you.

Example: My partner is quiet today. I wonder what I did to upset them.



# Healthy Me: Information on Calling Your Healthcare Team for Parent and Baby

## Kick counts

You have been getting to know your baby during your pregnancy. You are starting to learn their activity and sleep patterns. When you talk to your baby, play music, and pat or rub them through your abdomen they start to know you too. When babies hear voices and music before they are born, those same sounds can be soothing to them after their birth. As your baby grows, you will notice their movements as they roll, kick, and move around. During the last three months of pregnancy, your baby should move at least 10 times in a two-hour period. Count your baby's movements once every day.

## How to do kick counts:

- When the baby is awake and moving. About 30 minutes after you eat a meal or drink something is a good time.
- Lie on your left side and relax.
- Notice your baby's movement. You can place your hand over your uterus.
- Count all the movement from the baby. It can be a big kick, a roll, or just a small movement.
- The count often takes less than 15 minutes. Once you have felt your baby move more than 10 times, you can stop counting. If you do not feel the baby move 10 times during the 2 hours or have some concerns, contact your healthcare team.

## Call your health care team if you newborn:

- Sucks poorly or feeds slowly
- Doesn't blink in bright light
- Rarely moves arms and legs; seems floppy
- Difficult to wake
- Skin or eyes appear yellow (jaundice)
- Has a fever of 100F or higher under 3 months old
- Has any breathing difficulties or turns blue
- Fewer than 6 diapers a day
- Has any drainage or odor from the umbilical cord area
- Excessive crying or shrieking as in pain

## Call your healthcare team if you have:

- High blood pressure
- Bleeding that soaks a maternity pad in an hour or less
- Fever of 101F or more
- Severe pain in abdomen or pelvis
- Deep sadness or depression or thoughts of harming yourself or your baby
- Worsening pain, redness, swelling or discharge at the site of your stitches
- Foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- Pain or redness in the breast with flu-like symptoms (headache, body aches, fever)
- Frequent urge to pee and/or burning with urination
- Constipation or hemorrhoids that are not helped by over-the-counter remedies
- Pain, heat, or redness in one area of your leg or if one leg is more swollen
- Severe headaches
- Change in vision or dizziness



# Session 9: Be Kind to Yourself

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice to feed your baby?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice of ways to positively encourage yourself?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Mindful Eating

*Pregnancy:* Newborn and Parent Care

*Self-Care:* Emotional Wellness Check-In's

*Mind Power:* Finding Calmness

*Closing:* How will I parent now and in the future?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Parenting

*"It comes with challenges, but at the same time I love being a mother. It keeps me grounded and focused on what life is really about."*

-Taraji P. Henson

## Mindful Eating

The way you eat during pregnancy and after baby is born might be different:

You might be eating more than usual

You might be eating less than usual because of morning sickness or heartburn

You might be eating more fruits and vegetables

You might be craving foods you never thought you would eat before

You might be thinking about how the food you eat affects your baby

You might be thinking about what foods to not eat during pregnancy

Food choices affect mom and baby. **Eating is directly connected with our thoughts, our feelings, and how our bodies feel.** Being aware of what we are eating is one way to take care of ourselves and be mindful of how we feel.



## Newborn and Parent Care

Taking care of yourself with a newborn can be challenging. Circle which boxes you feel comfortable with.

I have a plan for taking care of myself

I feel comfortable asking someone for help with the baby

I feel comfortable with my plan to feed my baby

I feel comfortable with the signs of labor and when to call my health care team

I feel comfortable asking someone for help with my other children

I feel comfortable calling a warm line

I feel comfortable calling my health care team during pregnancy and after baby is born

I feel comfortable asking for help cooking meals

I feel comfortable with my childcare for when I go back to work (if I am going back to work)

If you need help or have questions, find someone to ask right away. Before you have your baby, ask your health care team for resources in your community. Don't let little problems become big ones. If your baby is having trouble nursing, there are ways and people to help.

## Ask your health care team questions

*How do you take a baby's temperature?*

*How do you change a diaper?*

*How do you bathe a baby?*

*How do I feed my baby?*

*How much will I bleed?*

*What if I am feeling off or not myself?*

*What do I need to do if I experience baby blues, stress from being a new mom or postpartum depression?*

*What advice would you give someone who is pregnant?*

*What other questions do you have for your health care team?*



*Advice for baby's health care team?*

*How long will it take for me to recover?*

*How do I clean the umbilical cord stump?*

*What signs should I look when I come home?*

*When will I come for my postpartum visit?*



## Newborn care

### Safe feeding and sleep

Newborns and infants **need to be held while feeding**

- To prevent choking on nipples or vomiting

Newborns and infants **need to sleep in a separate bed**

- Bed sharing with parents or siblings has an increased risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Place on back while sleeping
- Place in standard crib with no pillows, blankets, stuffed animals or crib bumper

Newborns and infants **need to have a safe car seat**

- Be sure your car seat meets current safety standards and it's installed correctly

Newborns and infants **need clean air**

- Keep a smoke-free home and car
- Do not smoke near the baby

### All babies have basic needs:

- Feed on demand, but at least 8 to 12 times a day
- Diaper changes when they have a wet or soiled diaper about 6 to 8 times a day (there are resources for diapers if needed)
- Comforted when they cry
- Held and interacted with regularly (remember there are hands free options for baby carrying)
- Sleep in a quiet safe place
- Be cleaned daily with mild soap, especially in the neck and genital areas
- Have umbilical area clean and dry to prevent infection until the cord falls off (about 1-2 weeks). Check for redness or pus around the cord as these may be signs of infection.





## Tips for breastfeeding:

- Colostrum is milk. Your milk is coming and baby's tummy is very small in the first few days
- Feed often: The more you nurse the more milk your body makes
- Listen closely: Listen for swallowing. Switch sides when swallowing slows down or your baby stops sucking
- It is recommended that babies drink breast milk until 6-months-old. No other food or drink is needed
- Your breast milk is best for baby and provides all the nutrients they need
- Help position your baby's mouth
- Proper positioning prevents sore nipples. If breastfeeding hurts you or you get sore nipples, get help from a breastfeeding or lactation consultant
- Your baby should be tummy to tummy facing you. Position your baby so that their nose is near your nipple
- When the baby opens their mouth wide, help your baby find your nipple
- Baby's lips should be turned out on your breast with most of the areola in the baby's mouth
- Open baby's mouth wide with lips turned out. Put the top of your nipple on top of baby's tongue in the back of the throat
- Your baby should be directly facing you, chest to chest, chin to breast
- In the state of Missouri, anywhere mother is allowed to be, you are allowed to breastfeed



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice to feed your baby?



# Self-Care: Emotional Wellness Check-ins

What emotional support or affirmations can you say to yourself for encouragement you during your pregnancy and beyond?

I forgive myself for not being perfect

I can have many different feelings

I accept what I cannot change

I can say nice things about myself

I can be kind to myself

I am beautiful, I am proud, I am great

I focus on my breath and the moment

There are wonderful things in my future



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice of ways to positively encourage yourself?

## Mind Power

Check-in: *How are you feeling today?*

### *Finding Calmness: Roll It Up or Roll It Out*

What does calmness mean to you? This is a red carpet. Especially during pregnancy, it can be hard to understand or accept your own feelings, and then figure out what to do next. Imagine a red carpet being rolled out. The rolled carpet is tight, stiff and hard to move, but as the carpet begins to unroll it becomes loose, flexible and easier to move. Unroll the carpet until it is completely flat.



What are self-care practices we could use to unwind and feel less stressed?

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## Healthy Me: Information on Parenting

Communicating as a parent or with your partner can be hard. Finding ways to express yourself when you are calm means others will more likely hear your message and respond respectfully.

### **Expressing yourself as a parent and with your partner:**

- Picking your battles (what can I let go and what do I need to fight for)
- Matching your voice to your message (does it help when someone screams calm down?)
- Giving yourself space
- Redirecting others
- Breaking it down into steps
- Checking for understanding
- Ease tension through humor
- Provide choices to promote decision making
- Send “I” messages: I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_\_
- Verbally express yourself
- Cool down time
- Appeal directly to how you are feeling
- Use nonverbal cues to show how you are feeling

Caregivers, friends and family are newborns’ and infants’ “emotion coaches” and there are ways to support them in developing strong emotion skills:

- Developing strong attachment with the child
- Recognize your own emotions and identify them for your child.
- Feelings are feelings and they are what they are even when they are difficult or hard to manage.

# Session 10: Taking Care of Me Postpartum

## Voice and Choice:

- 1) How will you use your voice to talk about what self-care means to you?
- 2) How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice of how to best handle your stress?

## Let's discuss:

Icebreaker

Body Scan

*Pregnancy:* Newborn Care

*Self-Care:* Self-Care and a Newborn

*Mind Power:* Finding Calmness

*Closing:* What else do I need to know about taking care of myself and my newborn?

*Healthy Me:* Information on Baby Growth and Development

*"The baby made me eat it."*

– Anonymous

## Body Scan

Sometimes our bodies show us the emotion we are feeling and a common reaction to stress, anxiety and trauma is to tense and tighten your body. Body scans can help to bring awareness to areas of your body that feel stressed, anxious, or uncomfortable.

If you feel comfortable lay down or sit in your seat with your feet planted on the floor. The goal is to bring attention to feelings in different parts of your body and stay present in being aware of your body. Sometimes focusing on different parts of your body can be difficult and if you feel uncomfortable at any time you can stop or let someone know.



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to talk about what self-care means to you?



## Pregnancy: Newborn Care

The last weeks before birth and the first weeks after birth are filled with many decisions, experiences, and feelings. It is normal to feel many different emotions all at once.

**Think about what you feel and what you value about this moment.**

Check in with yourself:  
The best thing about  
now is...

Check in with yourself:  
What is special about  
you?

Check in with yourself:  
The best thing about  
today is...

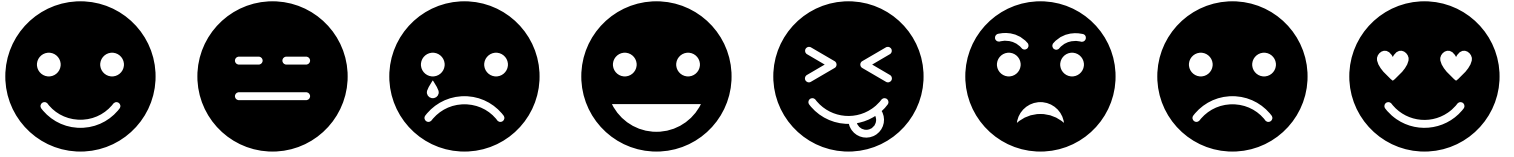




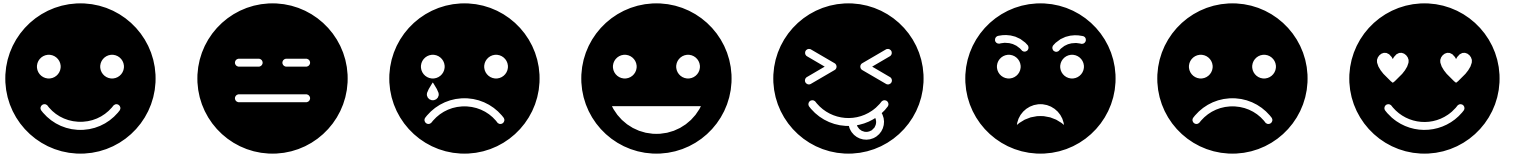
## I Just Had My Baby

Birth can be a joyous and happy time and you can feel fear, panic, and anxiety.

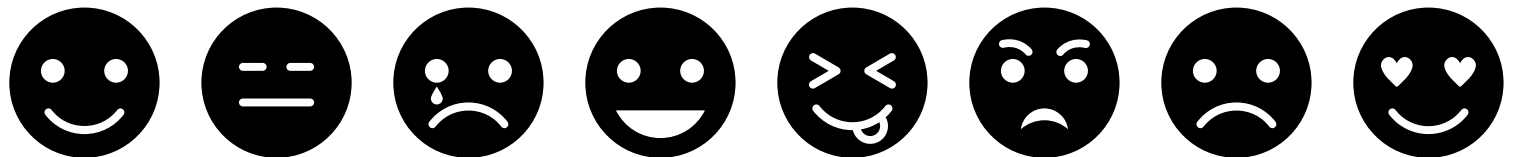
My birth experience was:



When I think about the birth of my baby I feel:



When I saw my baby for the first time I felt:



## Self-Care: Self-Care and a Newborn

What does self-care mean to you now?: \_\_\_\_\_

*Directions:* Circle the things you want to do take care of yourself when you have a baby.

**Sleep when the baby sleeps**

**Exercise**

**Back rub**

**Quiet time**

**Laugh**

**Meditate**

**Take a car ride**

**Take a break**

**Drink tea or coffee**

**Watch TV**

**Take a bath**

**Take a walk**

**Sing**

**Go to a religious place**

**Do a craft**

**Get hair or nails done**

**Dance**

**Play games**

**Wear sweatpants**

**Be with friends**

### Check in with yourself:

How will you take care of yourself before taking care of others?

# Mind Power

## Check-in: How are you feeling today?

### Finding Calmness

Feeling stressed with a newborn is normal. When feeling stressed think about ways to decrease your tension and address how you are feeling. Visualizing finding calmness by turning down the light, letting the snow fall in the snow globe or rolling out the red carpet.

Dealing with stress that becomes anger: What is the emotion powering how you are feeling? Looking at the feelings behind stress and anger can help us understand why we are having this reaction.



What are ways we could turn down the light, let the snowflakes fall or unroll the rug to decrease stress?



**Voice and Choice:** How will you use your voice to advocate for your choice of how to best handle your stress?

## Finding Calmness: Relationships

All people argue or disagree especially when stress is high or when we have different views, feelings or styles. Sometimes we argue about small things, such as what to have for dinner and sometimes we argue about big things, such as money or transportation.

**Newborns, infants, children, and even unborn babies can understand arguing by noticing facial expressions, faster heartbeats, or loud voices. They can sense how adults resolve argument and this sends an important message and helps model how to handle stress and conflict.**

What does a healthy relationship look like after giving birth?



# Healthy Me: Information on Baby Growth and Development

## Sleep

- Your baby will not sleep long during the first 6 weeks. After that, your baby might sleep 2 to 4 hours without waking at night.
- Help your newborn sleep better:
  - Swaddle or wrap (including their hands) in a blanket, cloth, or sleep sack. Be sure to not make it too tight or too loose.
  - Encourage sucking on a pacifier, hand or wrist
  - Rock or swing gently
  - Give a soft massage

REMEMBER: Always put your baby to sleep on their back

## Calming Your Baby

Newborns sometimes cry constantly and are not easily soothed.

### Swaddling

- Some newborns feel safe and secure when they are swaddled.

### Side/Stomach

- This is especially good for babies who might have gas pains. A “comfort hold” puts pressure on baby’s tummy while they lay face down across your lap or facing out on your hip. Remember to never put your baby down to sleep on their side or stomach.

### Shhh-ing

- Music, songs, recordings of hairdryers, running water or the ocean provide a rhythmic noise that soothes by imitating the sound of your heartbeat, which your baby hears for 9 months before being born.

### Swinging

- Carrying your baby may be soothing enough. You can also rock your baby in a rocking chair or baby swing. Car rides and stroller rides are another well-tested method. You can dance and bounce with your baby too, especially with some singing or background music.

### Sucking

- Sucking will soothe and steady a baby’s heart rate. It can also relax your baby’s stomach. There is no evidence to limit your baby’s breastfeeding time. Your baby can also suck on your clean fingers or their own hand.

Other ways to calm a crying baby:

- Change the diaper
- Feed the baby slowly, burping often
- Check whether the baby is too hot or too cold
- Play soft music, sing or hum
- Take the baby outside

- Hold your baby in a sling or carrier
- Walk around with baby

## Cleaning and Bathing

- Give your baby a sponge bath until their umbilical stump falls off. Just use a clean warm wet washcloth to wipe your baby's body.
- After the umbilical stump heals, you can give your baby a water bath in the sink or a tub. Babies do not need a bath every day.
- Regularly wipe the baby's hands, neck, and face with a baby wipe or and carefully clean the genital area during diaper changes.
- Test the water with the back of your hand or elbow to make sure it is not too hot.
- Use your hand to support baby's head and neck
- Seat your baby on a towel to prevent slipping
- Pour cups of water over the baby and do not use water straight from the spout
- Wrap your baby in a towel to dry off

**REMEMBER:** Always stay beside your baby. Babies can drown in less than an inch of water.

## Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaking a baby is very dangerous. Shaking a baby can result in Shaken Baby Syndrome, which can cause mental and physical damage or even death.

When does Shaken Baby Syndrome happen?

Sometimes you will feel frustrated, angry, stressed, or overwhelmed when your baby cries and does not stop. Sometimes there are other stresses in your life and your crying baby seems to be too much to handle.

No matter how you feel, never shake a baby.

If you are feeling frustrated or overwhelmed

- Place the baby in a crib or playpen on their back and let the baby cry alone for a few minutes while you take a break
- Walk away to use a coping or self-care skill
- Call someone for support
- Call your pediatrician as there might be a medical cause for your baby's crying

Signs of Shaken Baby Syndrome

- If the baby is only mildly injured, it may be hard to recognize the signs.
- The baby may vomit, eat poorly, be sleepy and hard to wake, or just be irritable.
- The baby may have shakiness, seizures, difficulty staying awake, difficulty breathing or is unconscious.

**REMEMBER:** If you believe that someone has shaken your baby, take the baby to the pediatrician or an emergency room immediately.



## Safety

- Never leave your baby unattended unless they are safely contained
- Never put a cord string or necklace on your baby
- Always support baby's head and neck
- In the car put your baby in the back seat in a rear-facing car seat