International Childbirth Education Association

Postpartum Doula Program
Part 3: Postpartum Emotions
Objective:

- Describe the range of possible postpartum emotions.
- List two factors that affect postpartum emotions.
- Summarize postpartum mood disorders.
In our culture, when a baby is born, a woman is expected to be grateful and joyful. However, when a woman has a birth experience that leaves her feeling traumatized, she is not only unhappy, but can experience severe emotions.

~ Solace for Mothers

An organization designed for the sole purpose of providing and creating support for women who have experienced childbirth as traumatic.
Perinatal Emotions

- Family dynamics
- Age and demographics
- Impact of stress
- When the unexpected occurs
- Extended support system
- When to seek outside help
Baby Blues

- This term is used to describe mild mood swings that happen after birth.
  - Occurs in 80% of mothers
  - Begins during first week postpartum
  - Should be gone by three weeks postpartum
Baby Blues Causes

- Rapid hormonal changes
- Fatigue and sleep deprivation
- Physical discomforts
- Disappointments including
  - the birth
  - partner support
  - breastfeeding
  - the baby
- Emotional and physical stress of birthing
Please note:

Baby Blues is not a Mood Disorder
Baby Blues Symptoms

- Lack of concentration
- Sadness
- Moodiness
- Feeling of dependency
Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders

There are Six Principal Disorders
15% to 20% of women experience depression

May occur anytime during pregnancy up to one year after birth
Symptoms

- Lack of joy or pleasure (lower sex drive)
- Decreased appetite
- Mood mostly down... gloomy, hopelessness
- Sadness
- Guilt – low self esteem
- Social withdrawal
- Sleep problems – unable to sleep or sleeps too much, fatigue
- Inability to concentrate and loss of focus (example – missing appointments)
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

- 9% of mothers have OCD
OCD Symptoms

- Intrusive, repetitive, and persistent thoughts or mental pictures
- A sense of horror and disgust about these thoughts
- Counting, checking, cleaning, or other repetitive behaviors
- Thoughts are often about hurting or killing baby
Panic Disorders

- Occurs in 10% of postpartum women
Panic Disorder Symptoms

- Hot or cold flashes, trembling, rapid heartbeat, numbness, or tingling sensations
- Restless, agitation, irritability
- Often no identifiable trigger for panic
- Excessive worry or fears
- Shortness of breath, chest pain, sense of being choked, smothered
- A panic attack may wake her up
Psychosis

- Serious illness in which the person loses touch with reality
- Occurrence is 1 to 2 per thousand perinatal women
- Disorder has a 5% suicide rate and a 4% infant infanticide rate
Psychosis Symptoms

- Seeing, hearing, and feelings things that others do not
- Confusion
- Mania
- Symptoms that may come and go (may appear to be normal and then hears voices)
- Delusional thinking (a need to kill the baby)
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Occurs following life threatening or injury producing events. (Example – sexual assault or traumatic childbirth)
- Occurrence is in 6% of women
- Rates are higher, up to 30% for parents who have children in intensive care units.
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
Symptoms

- Reliving past traumatic events
- Extreme Anxiety
- Reoccurring nightmares
Bipolar Disorder I and II

- There is no data base as to how often this occurs
Bipolar Disorder I and II

Symptoms

- Depression
- Rapid and severe mood swings
- Mania – (Bipolar I) or Hypomania (low level of mania in bipolar II)
Dealing With Grief

- Infant Death
- Genetic Defect
- SIDS
- International Cesarean Awareness Network (ICAN)