



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **Child development and your mental health
(EXTRACARE)**

Guidelines to the presenter

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer, rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion, rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information – including referring to the Ilifa website: www.ilifalabantwana.co.za.
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

Topic

Child development and your mental health

Objectives

- To build awareness of the impact maternal mental health issues can have on both the mother’s general health and the development of her child
- To highlight modes of support for mothers and their mental health

Introduction

We know about the importance of healthy pregnancy on the health of your child. But it's important to explore further the impact that not just the physical health of mothers, but also their mental and emotional state, has on the healthy development of babies and young children. It is very common for pregnant women and new mothers to experience anxiety and depression, but it is an issue that's not talked about nearly enough. Often women feel guilty or confused about their mental state and try to carry on without any special support. So today we're going to talk more about maternal mental health, how it affects young children and what kind of help is available for mothers feeling depressed or anxious.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>So first of all, when we talk about maternal mental health, what do we mean?</i></p>	<p>It's simply about the mental and emotional state of a mother. A good state of maternal mental health is when a mother feels positive and able to cope with her everyday activities and looking after her children. Poor maternal mental health can be when she feels anxious or stressed and finds it difficult to cope and manage her life. Or it can be even more severe, classified as depression.</p>
<p>2. <i>Why are women likely to suffer anxiety and depression during pregnancy or around the time of their baby's birth?</i></p>	<p>Many hormones affect the mother. Worry and concern around their child. Poverty and stress about caring for the child, like providing for the child, all affect the mother. Remember emotional stress is very common around pregnancy. And it must not be seen as something for which the mother must be blamed. It is common to feel worried, tearful, and unhappy, especially when there are many problems you have to face. The emotional stress experienced during pregnancy, and in the early months of motherhood, can have a negative effect on some mothers and caregivers and can sometimes result in depression.</p>

<p>3. <i>How does a mother's depression and anxiety affect her baby or young child?</i></p>	<p>A mother's mental health has a huge impact on her baby or infant. If her ability to take care of her baby is compromised, then the survival and development of the baby is adversely affected, even in the womb. Maternal depression in poorer settings is linked directly to low infant birth weight, high rates of malnutrition and stunting, higher rates of diarrhoeal disease, infection and hospital admission. It's also linked to children's immunisation schedules not being completed.</p>
<p>4. <i>How else is child development affected by this?</i></p>	<p>Since mental illness or distress has a detrimental impact on a woman's ability to care optimally for her child, it can have a negative effect on every aspects of child development - physical, cognitive, social, behavioural and emotional development of children.</p>
<p>5. <i>What's the difference between antenatal and postnatal depression?</i></p>	<p>Antenatal depression happens during pregnancy and postnatal depression happens after the child is born. Although they are not always distinct. The mother's state of mental health at this time is sometimes referred to as perinatal mental health – covering the period from pregnancy through to post-birth.</p>
<p>6. <i>Do many women suffer from this?</i></p>	<p>Mental health problems such as depression and anxiety during pregnancy and after childbirth are very common all over the world. One in three to one in five women in developing countries, while one in 10 in developed countries has a significant mental health problem while they are pregnant or after their baby is born. So, as you can see, mental health problems are two to three times</p>

<p>7. <i>Why are the levels of maternal mental health problems so high in countries like South Africa?</i></p> <p><i>A reminder that today we're talking about maternal mental health and depression on <Show name>, with my guest, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx from xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. If you have any questions or examples of your own experience, or that of a mother close to you, of mental health issues affecting young children, phone in now on tel: xxxxxxxxxxxx.</i></p> <p>8. <i>Does poor mental health affect a mother's general health?</i></p>	<p>more likely to affect mothers in developing countries. South Africa is one of the African countries with a particularly high rate of mental health problems for mothers around this time. It is also significantly higher than the rate in other developing countries such as Nigeria or Uganda.</p> <p>Many women living in countries like South Africa are exposed to all sorts of risk factors, which increase their chances of developing mental health problems. Some of these include living in poverty, less valued social roles and status, unintended pregnancy and gender-based violence. Other factors can include HIV, social isolation and living in unsafe areas. Such stress factors all contribute to high levels of mental health problems and women living in low-income and informal settings in South Africa are particularly at risk of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety.</p> <p>Yes, pregnant women or new mothers with mental health problems often have poor physical health and also persistent high-risk behaviours, including alcohol and substance abuse. There is also increased risk of complications during pregnancy and pre-term labour. Significantly, women suffering poor mental health are less likely to care adequately</p>
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<p>9. <i>And how does this affect the health of her child?</i></p> <p>10. <i>It seems that there is some sort of stigma around mental health. Why is it that people don't talk about it often?</i></p>	<p>for their own needs – they are less likely to seek and receive antenatal or postnatal care or stick to prescribed treatment, such as taking medication for HIV or other chronic illnesses. Ultimately, poor mental health can lead to increased maternal mortality, whether because mothers are ignoring their own health needs or, in extreme circumstances, even taking their own lives.</p> <p>Unfortunately, if a mother is sick or in a state where she is not able to look after herself well, she is at risk of not being able to care properly for her baby or young child. This may include not feeding her child sufficiently or nutritiously, not being able to keep her child clean, not taking her child for immunisations or not seeking medical assistance if her child is unwell. The child could therefore become malnourished and at frequent risk of illness.</p> <p>It's interesting that, whereas many aspects of physical health don't carry any stigma, mental health issues can lead to feelings of shame and guilt, even though it is no more the sufferer's fault than catching a cold. This may stem from the mental health problem itself or from society's responses. Different cultures may have different beliefs about mental illness which could make it difficult to discuss. Stigma makes it difficult for mothers to seek help and make use of services effectively.</p> <p>Unfortunately, specialist mental health services are still not sufficiently integrated into general antenatal and postnatal health services in South Africa. But it is critical that health professionals take mental health very seriously and that women are given good support and understanding that mental health</p>
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<p><i>11. How would you know that you're suffering from distress or depression?</i></p>	<p>problems are not something to feel guilty about.</p> <p>You are likely to have a persistent feeling of sadness and low mood, lack of energy and feeling tired all the time. You may also have lost interest in the world around you and no longer enjoy things that you used to enjoy.</p> <p>Postnatal depression can interfere with your day-to-day life. Some women feel unable to look after their baby, or feel too anxious to leave the house or keep in touch with friends. Some women who have postnatal depression get thoughts about harming their baby. This is quite common, affecting around half of all women with the condition. They may also have thoughts about harming or killing themselves. These thoughts do not mean someone is a bad mother, but it is essential that this person gets help.</p>
<p><i>12. What kinds of support do you need if you're feeling like this?</i></p>	<p>It's really important that a pregnant woman or new mother has good support systems. She needs to be able to talk about her feelings and troubles to trusted health workers, family, friends, or community members. She may need help in ensuring that she goes regularly to the clinic for her antenatal appointments or to receive any kind of chronic medication. When her baby is born, she will need support in caring for her baby, managing ordinary activities like buying and making food for herself and her family. As anyone who's had baby will know, you feel exhausted in the first few months of motherhood and knowing that there's someone you can turn to, to look after your baby for a while, while you rest, can be enormously helpful. What's really important is</p>

<p><i>13. Is talking enough, or is it necessary to have medical treatment sometimes?</i></p> <p><i>14. What would you encourage pregnant women and mothers to do to look after themselves and ensure they stay happy and healthy and therefore make sure they have a positive impact on their child's development?</i></p>	<p>that mothers have people they can turn to for support, but equally, that friends and family take the initiative to offer support, rather than waiting to be asked.</p> <p>With the right social and emotional support, mothers can feel better. Healthy social and psychological support may include counselling, help from a social worker, or a family member, and can have a positive effect on reducing emotional stress and thus enabling mothers to care optimally for their child.</p> <p>Clinical depression needs to be properly treated and isn't something you can just snap out of. In instances of moderate to severe depression, pharmacological treatment is usually recommended, and effective in decreasing depressive symptoms. However, many professionals are careful of using antidepressants during pregnancy in case they affect the foetus. However, with improvements in pharmacology, several antidepressants have been reported to be relatively safe to use during pregnancy.</p> <p>Talking about your feelings and troubles to trusted health workers, family, friends, or community members can help you feel healthier. Take time to rest and do an activity you enjoy. Try to focus on the positive aspects of motherhood and your critical role as your baby's primary carer. Your baby knows you very well and learns about the world through you. As many mothers feel emotional stress, you may be able to share your feelings with those you know and help each other.</p>
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And, however you're feeling, it will have an effect on your child, so it's important to seek help.

Conclusion

Having mental health issues around pregnancy and new motherhood is clearly widespread – if you're feeling like this, it's important to remember that you're not alone. But, with good social and emotional support, mothers can feel better. Talking about your feelings and troubles to trusted health workers, family, friends, or community members can help you feel healthier. Remember, that, above all, it's critical to understand that the state of your mental health affects your child's development. For their sake, and your own, it's important to understand your mental and emotional state and know when to seek help.

Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Understand the link between the mental and general health of mothers and caregivers and child development
- Be aware of the risks of maternal health issues to babies and young children
- Understand the importance of support to pregnant women/new mothers
- Know that simple things like talking to people such as your healthcare worker about your problems or taking some time to rest can help.