



Wellness Tools

Pregnancy and life after having a baby can come with many emotions. It's normal to feel happy and excited one moment, stressed or sad the next. It's also really common to feel overwhelmed or unsure.

Taking care of your mental health is taking care of you and your baby.

These easy-to-use tools and resources were designed with you in mind.

They can help you understand your feelings and give you simple ways to feel more like yourself again.



Item #1: Action Plan for Mood Changes During Pregnancy or After Giving Birth

Read about different feelings you might be having and ways to find help.

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Item #2: Self-Care Plan

This worksheet can help you think about simple ways to take care of yourself and feel better when you are stressed, down, or overwhelmed.

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Item #3: Safety Plan

This worksheet may help you notice your feelings when a mental health problem or crisis is building so you can act as soon as possible to feel better.

Remember, you're not alone. Many moms go through this, and reaching out for help is a sign of strength. Talk to your doctor or nurse about how you feel. You deserve support, and your health care team is here to take care of you.

If you need help now: call 1-833-TLC-MAMA

The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline provides confidential support for mothers and their families before, during, and after pregnancy.

Action Plan for Mood Changes During Pregnancy or After Giving Birth

Having mood swings, as well as feeling down, anxious, overwhelmed, and scared, are very common during and after pregnancy. If your feelings are impacting your life or your ability to care for yourself or your baby, we want to make sure you have the resources and support you need.

If you can relate to these feelings, see below for what you can do.

If you...

Aren't feeling like yourself	Have slight difficulty falling asleep
Have trouble managing emotions (ups and/or downs)	Have occasional difficulty focusing on a task
Feel overwhelmed, but still able to care for yourself and baby	Are less hungry than usual
Feel mild irritability	

To help yourself...You may be experiencing mood changes that happen to many pregnant and postpartum individuals.

Take care of yourself.	Monitor your mood.
Ask someone (family, friend, babysitter) to help with childcare so that you can rest and exercise.	Find a health professional to talk to if things get worse.

If you...

Feel intense uneasiness that hits with no warning	Are overwhelmed with worry
Feel foggy and have more difficulty completing tasks than usual	Sometimes feel really "up" or high and doing more than usual
Stop doing things that you used to enjoy	Are taking risks you usually wouldn't
Have scary or upsetting thoughts that don't go away	Are on edge and cannot relax
Have difficulty falling or staying asleep, even when your baby is asleep	Feel numb or detached, like you are just going through the motions
Feel guilty, or like you're a bad mother	Have no interest in eating
Are falling behind with job or schoolwork, or struggling in relationships with family or friends	Have thoughts of hurting yourself without a plan
Have family/friends mention that you're not acting like yourself	

Find help...You may be experiencing mood changes that happen to many pregnant and postpartum individuals.

Contact us (your doctor or nurse). We are here to help.	See the Anxiety and Depression Association of America's telehealth provider list: https://adaa.org/finding-help/telemental-health/provider_listing
Contact your insurance company for mental health resources.	
Talk to loved ones about these feelings.	Search the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) website for information and resources: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/
Contact Postpartum Support International (PSI) for support and resources in your area: Call 800-944-4773 (English or Spanish) Texting in English: 800-944-4773 Texting in Spanish: 971-203-7773 Or search their online mental health directory: https://psidirectory.com/	Read or complete workbook materials: Pregnancy & Postpartum Anxiety Workbook by Pamela S. Wiegartz and Kevin Gyoerkoe [Available for purchase or in libraries.]

If you...

Feel hopeless	Have thoughts or plans about hurting yourself or your baby
Feel out of touch with reality including seeing or hearing things that others do not	Have family/friends who are worried about your safety or baby's safety due to your mood

Get help now!

Go to a local emergency room or call 911 for immediate help.	Call the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 .
Call or text the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline for free and confidential support: 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)	Text the U.S. Crisis Line at 741741 .

Getting help is the best thing you can do for yourself and your baby.

Your mental health is important to us, please call your doctor or nurse with any concerns or questions.

Self-Care Plan

When you're pregnant or have a baby, your life can feel very different. It's normal to feel overwhelmed, stressed, or sad. It can be tough to deal with problems when you're feeling down and low on energy. Creating a self-care plan can be helpful for taking care of yourself and your baby's needs.



- 1. Simple goals and small steps.** Break your goals down into small steps and give yourself credit for each step you finish.



- 2. Make time for pleasurable activities.** Commit to scheduling a simple and enjoyable activity each day.

Things I find pleasurable include:

During this week, I will spend at least _____ minutes doing (choose one or more activities to try):



- 3. Stay physically active.** Make time to move your body and be active, even if it's only a few minutes.

During this week, I will spend at least _____ minutes doing (write in ways you'll be active):



- 4. Ask for help.** Look to the people in your life who may help you – for example, your partner, your parents, other relatives, your friends.

People I can ask to help me:

During this week, I will ask at least _____ person/people for help.



- 5. Talk or spend time with people who can support you.** Explain to friends or loved ones how you feel. If you can't talk about it, that's OK – you can still ask them to be with you or join you for an activity.

People I find supportive:

During this week, I will contact (name/s):

And try to talk with them _____ times.



6. **Belly breathing** is about breathing in a certain way that triggers your body's natural calming response.

Begin by slowly bringing your breath to a steady, even pace.

Focus on breathing in from the very bottom of your belly, almost as if it's from your hips/pelvis.

See if you can breathe in a way that makes your belly stick out on the in-breath and deflate totally on the out-breath. Your chest and shoulders should stay quite still. It's all about breathing with your belly.

Any amount of time you can find to do this can help. Aim to practice for 10–15 minutes at least 2x/day.



7. **Mindful breathing** helps bring awareness into the present moment using our body's natural rhythm of breath. Bring your attention to your own natural rhythm of breath.

Notice physical sensations with breathing, such as the textures of clothing, feet on floor, or movement of your body.

When your mind offers a distraction, notice it and bring your attention back to the physical sensation of natural breath. Try and notice the temperature of the in-breath and out-breath. Notice the precise moment in the rhythm where an in-breath becomes an out-breath.

Practice this when you feel like you could use some present-moment grounding.



8. **Sleep is a very important part of self-care.** Here are some tips to help you sleep better at night:

Watch how much caffeine you take in. Caffeine stays in the body for 10–12 hours. Consider limiting coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, and energy drinks – and setting a cutoff point during the day (such as lunchtime) to stop drinking or eating caffeine.

Set a routine. Set regular times for going to bed and waking up, even if you slept poorly the night before. Set up a relaxing routine 1–2 hours before bed where you do something calming and limit your exposure to electronics and light. Getting into a routine will train your body to prepare for sleep near bedtime.

Keep the bedroom mellow. Only use your bed for sleep and sexual activity. This helps your body link the bed with sleep rather than other things that keep you awake. Keep your bedroom dark and cool and move your clock to prevent you from constantly checking it throughout the night.



Safety Plan

A suicidal crisis can be hard to predict. Sometimes, these thoughts can come on suddenly, but often they go away on their own. Safety planning is a way to help you become more aware of your feelings when a crisis is building so you can act as soon as possible to decrease your distress and get through the suicidal crisis safely.

My Warning Signs

What thoughts, moods, images, situations, and/or behaviors tell me I might be headed for crisis?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My Coping Strategies

What can I do on my own to take my mind off of my problems? (examples: journaling, exercise)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Who can provide a positive distraction for me when I am feeling bad? (name/contact #)

1. _____
2. _____

What places or social settings can provide a positive distraction when I am feeling bad?

1. _____
2. _____

My Environmental Safety

Research has shown that **limiting access to dangerous objects saves lives**.

Please review the Suicide Prevention Resource Center handout on limiting access to lethal means.

<https://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/Handout-WhatClientsOrFamilies.pdf>

My Crisis Response

Who can I ask for help to get me safely through the crisis? (name/contact #)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is the name and contact number for my doctor, therapist, and/or counselor?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are my reasons for living?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are urgent/crisis and educational resources if I am in need or a loved one is in need?

National Resources

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call **988**

Call or text the National Maternal Mental Health Hotline for free and confidential support:
1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)

Crisis Text Line: Text **HOME** to **741741**

Suicide Prevention Resource Center: www.sprc.org

National Institutes of Health: www.nimh.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov

We recommend having your **safety plan** somewhere **you can see it** and access it when you are at risk of a suicidal crisis. Post a copy at home and keep a copy with you. You can take a picture of your safety plan on your phone, have a hard copy, or download a safety planning mobile app on your phone. You can search “Safety Plan” in your app store and see which ones have the components of our recommended safety plan here.

Do whatever it takes to stay safe and make it through the crisis. You are worth it.