

Space for Early Parenting Content Descriptor

The early parenting program has been designed to relieve subthreshold symptoms of worry and low mood in the perinatal period, as well as helping with sleep difficulties. It enables the client to identify if further support is required for an anxiety disorder or clinical depression. The program aims to improve perinatal wellbeing by:

- *Helping the client to understand the role of emotions and their impact during the perinatal period*
- *Normalizing emotional change during the perinatal period*
- *Focusing on developing a good sleep cycle and healthy sleep habits for the client and their child*
- *Using Progressive Muscle Relaxation to reduce tension and worry and aid sleep*
- *Giving the client useful strategies to prevent or manage symptoms of low mood using Behavioral Activation (BA)*
- *Helping the client to manage their worry and anxiety by teaching them how to differentiate between practical and hypothetical worries, and which techniques to use to deal with each one.*
- *The program is accessible 24/7, allowing users to access the program at a time that suits them and in the comfort of their own home.*

Target audience

This program is aimed at parents/caregivers who are in the perinatal period, which covers the time while expecting a baby and one-year post birth. The program is

designed for those experiencing (or those who may be at risk of experiencing) subthreshold symptoms or clinical depression and/or anxiety.

The problem

Up to 20% of women develop a mental health problem during pregnancy or within a year of giving birth; the latest research shows that 8% of men may also develop a mental health problem during this time. Depression and anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problems in the perinatal period. The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE, 2018) recommends talking therapies and supported self-help for the treatment of these problems. Many areas of the UK do not have specialist care pathways for this population and there are not enough trained specialist staff to meet demands. In addition, help-seeking in this population can be restricted by stigma surrounding the care-giver role, either in relation to the baby or other children in the family. Further barriers to treatment include a restricted time schedule and childcare considerations. cCBT offers a flexible, evidence-based way to access help during this period.

Qualitative research has shown that what parents want from CBT in the perinatal period is a tailored treatment specific to their population, choice in how they move through this treatment, a mentor/supporter to guide them, a flexible treatment that they can access when it suits them, and language that is easy to understand (O'Mahen, 2012).

Program Modules

Finding Your Feet

In this module you will learn about depression and anxiety in the perinatal period, and how this program can help you to improve your wellbeing.

Tuning In To Feelings

This module takes a closer look at the different emotions, thoughts, behaviors and physical reactions you might experience during the perinatal period.

Improving Sleep

In this module, you will learn more about sleep and how this can be affected during the perinatal period.

Taking Action

In this module, you will learn more about how you can manage low mood or depression with an evidence-based intervention called Behavioral Activation (BA).

Dealing with Worry

This module introduces you to the role of worry and anxiety in the perinatal period. You will learn how to cope with and manage your worries more effectively.

Staying Well

This final module brings together all the skills you have learned and ideas you have gathered so far, giving you tips on how to maintain these positive changes and stay well in the future.

Table: Modules, Goals, Topics and Activities

Module Name	Therapeutic Goals	Topics	Activities
Finding Your Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and orientate the client to the program. Briefly introduce the perinatal period and normalize possible changes in thoughts, emotions, physical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the perinatal period? The perinatal period and your wellbeing – demographic information about prevalence of mental health problems in the perinatal period in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perinatal Myths and Facts Quiz Goals tool PMR tool

	<p>changes and behaviors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help clients to understand the facts surrounding mental health and the perinatal period. • Introduce the client to CBT and how this can help them. • Engage men using the program, letting them know that the perinatal period is applicable to them. • Introduce the first tool, PMR to reduce tension, worry and improve sleep. 	<p>both women and men.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making time for yourself – the importance of self-care and help-seeking. • Information about the program, CBT and how to use the program. • The importance of setting goals. • Personal stories across a range of contexts from female and male perspectives 	
<p>Tuning In To Feelings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable the client to recognize mental health symptoms and how these may develop and maintain. • Introduce the role of emotions in the TFB cycle and help the client to become more familiar with emotions. • Familiarize the client with the role and impact of diet, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The function of emotions - normalizing emotional difficulties in the perinatal period. • Introduction to TFB cycle and where emotions fit in the cycle. • Psychoeducation about physical body reactions, e.g. the fight, flight or freeze response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFB cycle tool • Staying in the present - Breathe

	<p>exercise, sleep, caffeine and alcohol on their mood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support clients in completing their own TFB cycles and reflecting on their own situation and emotions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal stories. • Information on physical health, e.g. sleep, diet, exercise, caffeine, alcohol and medication. 	
<p>Improving Sleep</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalize sleeping difficulties during the perinatal period. • Introduce the client to common changes during the antenatal and postnatal period for the client, other family members and the baby. • Encourage personalized and flexible day and night-time parenting that work for the client and their baby. • Enable the client to build their own healthy sleep habits. • Support the client in understanding of healthy sleep habits and normal sleep for babies and toddlers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding normal infant sleep • Facts about the client’s own sleep, e.g. irregular sleep patterns, circadian rhythms, sleep cycle phases. • Preparing for bed and bedtime routines for parents, including exposure to light, bed & bedroom, temperature, noise and caffeine intake. • Personal stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleeping Habits quiz • Bedtime routine list apps • White noise audio

Taking Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help the client to understand the role of action and inaction in the cycle of depression. • Introduce BA as a technique to reduce avoidance and improve mood. • Support the client in recognizing their own avoidance patterns and finding alternative coping strategies to replace them with. • Encourage the client to create a list of activities they've been avoiding, and gradually build back a normal pattern of engaging in these activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cycle of low mood and depression. • Breaking the cycle with BA – what BA is and how it can help. • TRAP and TRAC technique for finding alternatives to avoidance. • Motivational tips and techniques to help with choosing a TRAC over a TRAP. • Creating an activity list for routine, pleasurable and necessary activities • Activity plan for scheduling in activities. • Reviewing your plan and overcoming problems or barriers. • Personal stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRAP and TRAC tool • Activities list app • Activity scheduling tool • Staying in the present - Sounds
Dealing With Worry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalize fears about giving birth, anxieties and worry in the perinatal period and help the client to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychoeducation about worry, anxiety and the worry cycle. • Practical and hypothetical worries, and how to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxious thoughts and worries quiz • Worry Tree tool • Problem solving tool

	<p>understand when to get more help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the client to the worry cycle, and the difference between hypothetical and practical worries. • Encourage the client to differentiate between hypothetical and practical worries using the worry tree tool. • Help the client to manage or cope with hypothetical worries, and actively problem solve for practical worries. 	<p>separate them using the Worry Tree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing hypothetical worries using worry time and refocusing attention techniques. • Managing practical worries using problem solving. • Personal stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying in the present - breathe
Staying Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate the program and help the client to understand that feeling well is a work in progress. • Enable clients to identify triggers and warning signs and create a staying well plan that will help them to deal with these situations. • Encourage clients to seek help and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finishing up with the program • Planning for the future • The importance of social support and asking for help in the perinatal period • Helpful perinatal resources - information on key parenting areas and links to reputable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying Well plan • Back up and support network • PMR tool

	<p>social support from their network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide useful resources for further information on breastfeeding and parenting. • Revisit the PMR tool and encourage its sustained daily use. 	<p>sources of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal stories 	
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