



Wellbeing in Pregnancy

A Guided Self-Help Workbook

This self-help workbook is designed to help you during pregnancy. It is intended to be used together with regular support from a psychological wellbeing practitioner.

The exercises are based on cognitive behavioural therapy, which offers a practical approach to help you cope with some of the thoughts and feelings that you may be having. It includes information about pregnancy, and examples from other women who have been through this type of treatment. It is for first time mums-to-be and also for women who already have children.

Throughout the workbook there are links to useful websites and information about other sources of support which you can access. There is also a list of resources at the end of the workbook where you can find more information.

If you need extra support it may be helpful to contact one of the people here. Write in their contact details here so that you know how to get in touch with them:

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Maternity helpline number at my hospital:



Name of my psychological wellbeing practitioner:



Name and number of my GP:



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What do I need help with?

Before you start reading the workbook, take a few minutes to answer the questions below. There are no right or wrong answers - make a note of anything that is important to you. If you are unsure about some of the questions then you could return and fill them in later.

■ What are your main concerns or worries at the moment?



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■ What started these problems off? What is keeping these problems going?



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■ What makes you feel better? What makes you feel worse?



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■ **What needs to change for you to feel better?**



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■ **What strengths and resources do you have to support you?**




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■ **What is your main goal over the next two months?**



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*Come back to this page when you have finished the workbook
and see if your answers are similar or different.*



1.

Wellbeing in pregnancy

How can this workbook help me?

Having a baby can be one of the most important and challenging things you will ever do. This experience is different for everybody. While many women feel excited, most women have some mixed feelings and some feel quite unsure. You might be worried about the changes that you face, or even angry that the pregnancy has happened. If unplanned, finding out that you are pregnant can be a shock. Small things might make you upset and many women worry about the birth and how they will cope as a mother, or how they will cope with more children.

Pregnancy can also be a time when you start to think more about your own childhood and your relationship with your parents, which can sometimes bring up difficult feelings.

Having a wide range of emotions during pregnancy is very normal.

If you find yourself feeling low and losing interest in things you normally enjoy for more than a couple of weeks, then you may be suffering from depression. Depression during pregnancy (antenatal depression) can affect anyone, and occurs in every culture. Women with depression often also feel quite anxious and worried about a lot of different things.

This workbook aims to:

- ♦ Provide information about some of the causes and symptoms of depression during pregnancy
- ♦ Help you to understand some of the thoughts and feelings you are having
- ♦ Support you in finding ways to overcome depression and adjust to your pregnancy

The workbook will help you to make small changes to your day to day life to help you through pregnancy and to think more positively about the future. It is based on treatment approaches, for example, cognitive behaviour therapy, which have been found to help people who have depression and anxiety. To get the most out of the workbook you will need to give yourself time to read the information, do the exercises and to carry out homework tasks - in our experience this will be worth the effort and often becomes easier once you start to make some changes.

As you work through the different sections you will probably find some more useful than others. Everyone is different and you will begin to learn which things are particularly helpful to you and which things don't fit so well. At the

end of each chapter there will be suggestions for tasks to do during the week, related to what you learned in the chapter.

What is depression?

Here are some women's experiences of antenatal depression. Everyone is different but you may find some of their descriptions familiar:

'I couldn't think clearly or make decisions. I felt tense all the time and would lie awake at night not being able to sleep. I thought maybe that was normal for pregnant women but it made me feel so useless.'

'I was crying all the time. Just getting through the day was difficult as I felt so down. I knew I would be the worst mother in the world and remember thinking that my baby would be much better off with someone else.'

'Everyone else was excited about me being pregnant, but I just felt numb. Nothing made me smile and I couldn't enjoy anything anymore.'

The main symptoms of depression include feeling low in mood and losing interest in things that are normally enjoyable. You may also experience some of the things in the boxes on the next page. Do you recognise any of these? Add more examples on the dotted lines in the boxes overleaf:

Feelings:

- ♦ Sad and upset
- ♦ Not enjoying anything
- ♦ Anxious or panicky
- ♦ Irritable and angry or resentful
- ♦ Not feeling the way you want to about being pregnant



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Body signs:

- ♦ Exhausted with no energy
- ♦ Changes in your sleep
- ♦ Changes in your appetite
- ♦ Unable to relax



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Thinking:

- ♦ Poor concentration
- ♦ Hard to make decisions
- ♦ Confused or cluttered thoughts
- ♦ Self-critical thoughts
- ♦ Worrying a lot
- ♦ Thoughts of self-harm



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Behaviour:

- ♦ Putting things off
- ♦ Avoiding people and not going out
- ♦ Getting into arguments more easily
- ♦ Not doing everyday tasks, or trying to do too much



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Pause and notice.....

There are arrows between the boxes. These show that thoughts, feelings, body signs and behaviours can influence each other. So, for example, if you don't get much sleep you might feel more irritable the next day and then get into arguments more easily. Or, if you're finding it hard to make decisions you might put things off and then feel guilty for not doing them.

■ **Can you notice any links between some of the experiences you've been having?**



Some of the symptoms in the boxes are related to anxiety e.g. feeling panicky, trying to do too much, worrying a lot. Depression and anxiety often go together.

■ **Have you been feeling anxious recently? What have you noticed?**



Research suggests that some degree of depression is experienced by more than **one in ten women** during pregnancy, so if you recognise these symptoms you're certainly not alone.

Why do I feel like this?

Anyone going through the major life change of having a baby can become depressed. This is true whether it's your first baby or if you already have children. The way we see ourselves and the way others see us can change during this time. The body also goes through some enormous physical changes during pregnancy:

- ♦ increases in the hormones oestrogen and progesterone can lead to breast swelling and morning sickness which can be very uncomfortable and affect your appetite;
- ♦ lower levels of minerals such as iron and zinc can lead to lower energy levels and mood;
- ♦ weight gain and changes in body shape can affect self-esteem and confidence.


■ **Have any of these changes affected how you feel about yourself?**



There are also other things that might put you at greater risk. For example:

- ♦ if you've had depression or anxiety before
- ♦ if you're experiencing other difficult events in your life
- ♦ if you don't have many family or friends around to talk to
- ♦ if your pregnancy was unplanned and you feel unsure about it
- ♦ if you're having problems in a relationship with a partner
- ♦ if you have had, in the past or more recently, difficult or traumatic experiences

■ **What is your own situation like at the moment? Take a few moments to think about what stage you are at in your life and any important things that may have happened either recently or in the past. Make a few notes about these things below. Some of these events might have influenced the way you are feeling at the moment.**



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What can I do about these feelings?

It can be very hard to just change your feelings. However, look back at the boxes on page 8. Lots of things influence how you feel. This means that making small changes to the way you think and behave can have an effect on your mood and wellbeing.

A good place to start is to ask yourself:

'What would things be like if I wasn't feeling low?'

You might want to think about your relationships, social life, work, home, body.

■ **Make a note of how things might be in different areas of your life if you weren't feeling low. If this seems difficult, just jot down some initial ideas and talk it through with your therapist.**



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The next section will give you some ideas about how to start making changes towards where you want to be - in particular, making changes in your body, your thoughts and your behaviour. The rest of the workbook will go into more detail about the ways you can do this.

Focus on your body

When you have a lot of worries or stress, this can lead to tension in your body.

You might notice:

- ♦ your muscles feel tense
- ♦ your breathing is more shallow than normal
- ♦ your heart rate might be faster than usual
- ♦ you may have trouble relaxing and find it hard to get to sleep

Having some stress is normal, and if you find yourself spending a lot of the time feeling tense, this can affect your health and make it hard for you to manage your pregnancy. Finding ways to allow your body to relax means you can recharge,

get some rest and make sure that both you and your baby stay healthy and well.

One way to do this is by putting time aside each day to relax. This involves focusing on your body, noticing where any tension is, and letting that tension go. Just a few minutes a day can have a positive effect.

You can use a CD/MP3 from your therapist to take you through some breathing and relaxation exercises. These are intended to help you find time to take care of yourself, and also to help you learn to focus on your body and to reduce tension. This is helpful both now and after the baby is born. The exercises last about 15-20 minutes and it's best to listen in a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed.

■ What will be the best time of day to do this? Where is the best place to sit and listen? How will you make sure that you're not disturbed? Write down when and where you will listen to the exercises:



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Notice unhelpful thoughts

When we are depressed, our thoughts tend to become gloomy and overly negative. These thoughts might be about everyday things but might also be about the pregnancy.

Box 1 overleaf shows some of the typical worries and thoughts that pregnant women have and some of the ways you can respond to these.

Box 1: Common worries in pregnancy

'I won't be able to cope with being a mother.'

Many women find the transition to being a mother difficult and stressful. *'It's a big change and there are times when I will probably feel overwhelmed. This is different to not being able to cope'*. Remember that there is no such thing as a 'perfect' mother and it will take time for me to adjust to the change.

'Something will go wrong during labour and I'll lose the baby.'

No one can predict how a birth is going to go and every woman knows there is a small risk involved. However, the midwifery team will be experienced in picking up and dealing with any complications to make sure any risks are reduced. *'Focusing on keeping myself healthy during pregnancy and building strong relationships with family and friends who can support me are the best ways to look after myself and the baby'*.

Do you recognise any of these?

When you're depressed, you are more likely to have certain types of thoughts. For example:

Worrying: 'What if there's something wrong with the baby?'

Expecting the worst: 'It's all going to go wrong.'
'My partner won't be interested in me anymore.'

Criticising yourself: 'I can't understand this booklet, I must be stupid.'
'I'll be no good as a mum.'

Hopeless thoughts: 'Everyone would be better off without me.'
'Things will never get better.'

'I had a bad relationship with my parents so I'll probably have a bad relationship with my child.'

Every relationship is different. *'I am an individual with my own qualities. Being aware of what I wasn't happy with in previous relationships means I can choose to do things differently. It will take time to get to know my baby and learn what he or she needs from me. Being open and flexible in building this new relationship will help the two of us to grow together'*.

'If I'm stressed and depressed during pregnancy then I'll damage my baby.'

'This thought will probably make me more stressed! Taking care of myself is a good way to take care of my baby and that is what I'm doing by using this workbook. Finding time to relax, talking to other women who have had babies, and looking after my body are all good ways to nurture both myself and my baby'.

As you can imagine, having these types of thoughts would leave anyone feeling low and unmotivated.

These thoughts are not necessarily true but are part of being depressed. When we are depressed, our thinking becomes 'biased' so that we notice negative things more easily than positive things and tend to see situations in a more negative way. This affects how we feel, and also how we behave.

Have a look at this example...

When is the baby due?
?



Why do people have to keep reminding me of this?!

Feeling: stressed, anxious
Behaviour: scowl, change the topic



It's so nice that people are interested!

Feeling: pleased, proud
Behaviour: smile, give some details

Without even realising it, our minds are constantly giving meaning to the things happening around us, deciding whether something is good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. It's not simply the situation which makes you feel bad but the way you THINK about the situation.

What sorts of thoughts do you normally have about:


■ Your situation at the moment?


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■ What other people may think about you?


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■ How things will be in the future?


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■ What sort of thoughts have you had about being pregnant or about how you expect the birth to be?



■ Are any of your thoughts 'unhelpful' thoughts which make you feel worse?



■ Remember, negative thinking is common when we are depressed. What would a helpful friend say to you if they knew some of your thoughts?



Change your behaviour

When people feel low they often do less. But this can end up making you feel worse.

Tara: *'I just felt really unmotivated and tired all the time so I started doing less and less. Then, of course, that made me feel really useless and like I was a failure. It also meant that everyday tasks were piling up until it just felt overwhelming to even think about trying to do them.'*

This is a common experience in depression. See the Appendix on p.77 for a diagram of a depression trap, which shows how depression can be maintained. However, some women find themselves at the other end of the scale, trying to do too much and constantly feeling under pressure to do more.

Sophie: *'I thought if I could just keep going and get everything done then I would feel ok. So I would rush around trying to clean and tidy and organise, making lists and checking things. I think I was trying to distract myself from worries, but it just left me exhausted.'*

Similarly, being pregnant can affect the things that you do, including putting limits on certain activities meaning you need to change some of your usual habits.

Naomi: *'The main thing that I used to enjoy was going out for a few drinks with friends. I couldn't do that when I became pregnant! I felt really isolated and I thought my friends wouldn't be interested in me anymore. I had to learn to find other ways to have fun that gave me the same sense of being part of something.'*

Do you recognise any of these patterns in yourself? During pregnancy, you need a balance between rest and activity so that you continue doing things that are important and meaningful to you, but also have time to relax and give your body a rest. Taking care of yourself is a way to take care of your baby.

You may also need to find different ways of spending time with people or having fun. For example, Naomi above didn't want to go clubbing with her friends anymore. Instead, she started going to pregnancy Zumba to keep active and arranged non-alcoholic cocktail-making evenings with friends.

As a first step to taking care of yourself, **make a list below of fun or enjoyable activities.** This might include things you've enjoyed before, things you know other people enjoy, or things you think you would enjoy.




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■ Which one of these could you do this week?



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■ When will be a good time to do this?



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In the next chapter you'll find out more about how to start planning some of these activities into your day.

SUMMARY

In this chapter you've learned that depression can affect anyone and means that you feel low or don't enjoy things. Things that have happened in your life can make it more likely that you get depression, and thoughts, feelings, behaviours and body signs all influence each other to keep depression going. BUT this means that by making small changes to your thoughts and behaviours you can start to change how you feel.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- ♦ Set yourself time to do the breathing exercises for 15-20 minutes every day this week.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO THAT'S HELPFUL?

- ♦ One of the key things we know about depression in women who are having a baby is the importance of having someone to talk to about all the changes that are taking place. Who do you know that is a good listener and could support you through this time? Once you've identified someone, let them know about the ideas in this chapter and what you think about them.
- ♦ Have a go at doing one of the activities you wrote down on page 15.



2.

Finding a balance in pregnancy

In the last chapter you looked at the different things that contribute to depression and how thoughts, behaviours and body sensations can all influence how you feel. Your main task was to try the relaxation exercises. How did you get on?

Tip: If you didn't manage to do the task, then it might be helpful to think about what got in the way. And remember you can always start again today.

In this chapter we'll look at how you can find a balance between activity and rest in pregnancy. This includes taking small steps towards your goals and problem-solving when things get difficult.

Planning Activities

Feeling low or anxious can mean that you end up doing too much or too little. Planning your day or week in advance can help to give you a balance of activities. Balance means including things that need to get done as well as things that make you feel good, and also having some time to relax.

Make a list below of activities that come under these headings:

Things that need to get done

e.g. house work, shopping etc.



Things that make me feel good

e.g. having a bath, talking with a friend etc



At the end of this chapter you can find a weekly planner on page 24. This is a way to plan in advance the different activities that you want/need to do and think about the best times to do them. For example, will it be easier to do them when no one else is in the house, or at a time of the day when you usually feel a bit better? Put some of the activities from the lists above into the planner, making sure you spread things out to get some balance each day.

It can be hard to make changes. The following things can help people stick to their plans:

- ♦ Get into a routine for the day. For example, getting up and going to bed at similar times each day, having dinner at around the same time and so on. Having regular sleep and wake times also has a positive effect on mood. What can you do to introduce some routine into your day?
- ♦ Encourage yourself. For example, put post-it

notes on the fridge to remind you, tell someone else your plan and ask them to gently encourage you, or set a reminder on your phone.

- ♦ Reward yourself. What nice thing can you do when you complete something?

Tip: Are you someone who often doesn't find time for yourself and tends to look after everyone else before doing things for you? Do you feel like you're not 'allowed' to do nice things?

REMEMBER, looking after yourself during pregnancy is a way of looking after your baby!

Setting Goals

Setting goals helps to give you direction and can boost your motivation and self-confidence. On page 10 you answered the question, 'What would things be like if I wasn't feeling low?' Have a look back at your answers as this can help you to think about what your goals are.

To make goals more powerful, it is useful to make them **'SMART'**:

- S**pecific: what exactly do you want?
- M**easurable: how you will know when you get there?
- A**chievable: will you need any extra help to make sure you can achieve this?
- R**ealistic: can your goal be achieved in the time you have?
- T**ime-bound: give yourself a time limit to achieve your goal

Have a look at these examples:

'I wanted things to be better with my partner because I felt we weren't connecting very well. But 'better' is a bit vague! Using the SMART goals helped me to think this through.'

- S** I wanted us to have more conversations about how we felt.
- M** This would mean having a specific time each week when it's just the two of us to talk.
- A** We used to talk a lot when we first got together so I knew we could do it.
- R** We both have a couple of evenings free each week so this seemed do-able.
- T** I gave myself until the end of the week to ask him if he would do this.

'At first my goal was just to feel happier. Using the SMART framework made me think about what this actually meant. For example, the main things I wanted to change were dealing with problems rationally instead of getting upset, and I also wanted to sleep better. Once I had these goals clear in my mind, I could start thinking about the steps to achieve them.'

Can you make one of the things you wrote on page 10 into a SMART goal using the boxes opposite:

GOAL

Specific - *what do you want?*

Measurable - *how will you know when you get it?*

Achievable - *is there anything extra you need to help you?*

Realistic - *is there anything that could get in the way?*

Time-bound - *when do you want to achieve it by?*

Taking small steps to work towards goals is an important way to improve your mood and self-confidence. What can you do this week to start working towards your goal? When will you do this? Add your ideas into the activity planner on page 24.

Problem-solving

People have different ways of coping with stress and problems. You might have learned these ways from other people or from strategies that have worked for you in the past. Having a new baby can be both a rewarding time, and also a stressful time

so it's worth thinking about how you can deal with this in a helpful way.

Think back to some difficult situations that you've faced in the past.

Do you tend to:

- Go to other people when you need help or prefer to solve things on your own?
- Find worries going round in your head or avoid thinking about things?
- Get emotional when things don't go as you planned or tackle things very practically?

What have you found most helpful to solve problems in the past?



Becoming pregnant can bring uncertainty and new situations which you may never have had to deal with before. Even if this isn't your first pregnancy, a new baby will bring changes to your family. Previous ways of coping may not work so well in a new situation. For example, avoiding a crying baby is not a good way to solve the problem! Often there is no right or wrong answer about how to act, but instead you'll need to find ways to problem-solve. This is a useful skill that can help you in many

situations and is worth practising.

Problem-solving means finding positive and practical ways to deal with things that happen in everyday life. This could be anything from not being able to get to your midwife appointment, to getting into arguments with your partner, or having to negotiate your maternity leave at work. Building your confidence to solve problems can stop you from feeling overwhelmed and make life seem more manageable.

The first step is to ask yourself:
'Can I do anything about this right now?'

NO

Then it's probably a worry. Worries tend to be negative thoughts about the future which go round in our heads and are often things we don't have control over.

YES

Then it's probably a problem. Problems are specific situations which may need us to take action to solve.

Which of the following are worries that you don't have control over at the moment and which are problems that you may be able to solve?

- a. What if my baby cries all the time and keeps us awake?
- b. My back aches if I stand up for more than 10 minutes.
- c. My partner might become seriously ill and lose their job
- d. I had a fight with my sister and she's angry with me

In this list a and c are worries. We all have to deal with uncertainty about what may happen in the future, but worry doesn't prevent these things, it just distracts us and makes us feel anxious. On the other hand, b and d in the list above are problems which are possible to solve.

Worried about worrying?

One thing that many people find useful when they worry a lot is 'worry scheduling'. This means putting half an hour aside each day which is your worry time. If you notice yourself worrying outside this time, pause the worry and tell yourself that you will have time to think about it later. You can even write down the worry to think about later, and this will stop you worrying that you'll forget the worry! This can help to reduce the amount of time you spend worrying so that your mind is free for other things.

Once you've identified a problem, there are **3 steps** to find a solution:

1 The first step is to be clear about how things will be different when the problem is solved. What do you want the outcome to be and how will you know when you get there? For example:

Problem: My back aches if I stand up for more than 10 minutes

Desired outcome: To be able to do all my everyday tasks without constant pain

2 The next step is to make a list of all the possible solutions which will take you from the problem to the desired outcome. Write down as many ideas as you can that might help solve the problem. Include even ones that seem silly - the point is to get your creative mind going. You might be able to think of some ways that you've solved similar problems in the past or you could ask someone else to help with this as other people may come up with ideas that you don't think of. Have a look at the example below:

Problem: My back aches if I stand up for more than 10 minutes

Desired outcome: To be able to do all my everyday tasks without constant pain

Possible solutions:

- Carry a fold-up chair with me so I can sit down
- Get a new back
- Breathe deeply and relax when it starts to hurt to reduce the pain
- Ask other people to go out to the shops for me so I don't have to stand up
- Ask my midwife about how to stand differently so it doesn't hurt
- Find out about exercises to strengthen my back muscles

3 Once you have a list of possible solutions, the next step is to decide which one is most likely to get you what you want. Then, try it out! After trying one of the solutions, if the problem is solved, great! If it isn't, try another possible solution.

Tip: 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again.' Remember that there isn't necessarily a 'best' solution. By thinking of lots of different solutions you give yourself options in case something doesn't work.

Some problems may seem more complex than this, especially if they involve other people. However, you can still use the same process:

Problem: I had a fight with my sister and she's angry with me

Desired outcome: Put the argument behind us and get on well again

Possible solutions – which will work best?:


- ♦ Ignore her and wait to see if she calls
- ♦ Send her angry text messages so she knows I'm annoyed too
- ♦ Ask my partner to go and see her to see what she's thinking

- ♦ Send her some flowers to say I'm sorry and hope she forgives me
- ♦ Go and see her to talk over the problem

Can you think of a problem that you're trying to deal with at the moment? Write down what you want the outcome to be and what some of the possible solutions might be. If you struggle to think of solutions, ask someone else to help. Other people often have ideas that may be different to yours.

Try out the solution which you think will work best and see what happens.


■ **Problem:**


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■ **Desired outcome:**


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■ **Possible solutions:**


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SUMMARY

In this chapter you have learned how to set yourself goals to help move towards where you want to be by using an activity planner. You also learned about worry scheduling and problem solving.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- ♦ Set a goal: Decide on which activities to do this week and plan when to do them. Notice how you feel after doing something on your schedule.
- ♦ Practice problem-solving: When you come up against a problem this week, have a go at thinking of lots of different solutions and trying some of them out.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO THAT'S HELPFUL?

- ♦ Talk to someone: did you identify a good person to talk to about what you're doing? Find a time to let this person know how you're doing and what your thoughts are about the exercises you've done.
- ♦ Relax: Don't forget to keep using the relaxation and breathing exercises from the last chapter. You could also put this in the activity planner.

Box 2: Approach or Avoid?

When you're depressed you tend to associate lots of things with negative feelings and bad outcomes. For example, 'If I go out of the house, I'll feel really tired', 'If I tell my friends how I feel they won't understand', 'If I let my partner know I'm annoyed with him he'll leave me'. These kinds of anxieties can stop you from facing problems and keep you 'stuck' in worry. They are a way of trying to AVOID difficulties but can actually lead to more problems in the long term.

Overcoming depression involves learning to APPROACH problems instead. While this might make you quite anxious at first, once you realise that you are capable of solving problems and dealing with life's difficulties you will notice a positive effect on your self-confidence and mood.

If you notice yourself worrying about something and avoiding dealing with a problem, ask yourself: What am I afraid of? What is the worst thing that could happen? What is the best thing that could happen? What is the most likely thing that will happen?

Use the problem-solving skills in this chapter to think about what you would like the outcome of the situation to be and which solutions are most likely to get you there. Then, make a decision to APPROACH the problem and see what happens.



3.

Managing relationships

In the last chapter you learned about planning activities and setting goals that are important to you as a way to improve your mood. You also learned about worry scheduling and problem solving as ways to take back control of your life and move forward. Your tasks included completing an activity planner during the week and having a go at problem solving any difficulties that came up. How did you get on? In this chapter we'll look at the relationships you have with the people around you, including different ways of communicating and asking for support. We'll also take a closer look at how the way you think can affect the way you feel.


If you think that you may be in an abusive relationship or suffering from domestic violence, please go to Box 4 on page 39 to see where you can get support.

Who's around?

One of the most important things we know about wellbeing in pregnancy is the need to have people around you. Support might be quite practical e.g. carrying things for you, picking up a prescription, driving you to an appointment, or it might be more emotional e.g. listening to your worries, holding your hand during your scan, letting you know you're not alone in some of your fears. Both these types of support are important.

Take a minute to think about who is around you and all the different relationships you have. This might include friends and family, colleagues and acquaintances, or health professionals.

■ **Who are the people that you are closest to and spend most time with?**



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■ **Who is in your wider social circle e.g. friends, colleagues or acquaintances?**




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■ **Which professionals or services are you in contact with e.g. GP, midwife, therapist, teacher?**




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■ **Who are the people that make you feel good, and give you warmth and reassurance?**




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■ **Who are the people who think very practically and are 'problem-solvers'?**




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■ **Who are the people who are good at giving advice and whose opinion you trust?**



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■ **Who has had a baby and knows the challenges of being pregnant?**



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All these people are part of your network and may be able to offer you different kinds of help and support throughout your pregnancy and after the birth.

How can I get what I need?

In pregnancy you shouldn't be lifting heavy things or doing anything too strenuous. Similarly, pregnancy might make it difficult to move around or be on your feet for a long time. In this case, you may need practical support with everyday tasks.

■ **What kinds of things are you finding difficult or would you like help with?**



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You may also need more emotional support. For example, having someone to tell about your day, to share any worries with, or just to have a cup of tea with. Pregnant women often find it helpful to talk to other women who are pregnant or who have children so that they can find out what their experiences were like.

■ **What emotional support would you like from others?**



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Thinking about all the different people you know, who might be able to give you some of the things above? Try to include a few different

people so that you're not asking one person to help with everything, and write their names next to the item.

- **Set a goal: who can you ask for support this week? Look at the lists you made above of the things you need and who you will ask for what.**



Focusing on thoughts

How good are you at asking for help? People have different reactions to needing support. See if you recognise yourself in any of the examples below:

- ♦ Some people feel very guilty about asking for help and have thoughts such as *'I feel like a burden. I need to do it on my own'*. If you recognise this in yourself, remember many people really like being asked to help but don't know you need it if you don't ask.
- ♦ Some people always ask the same person for help. This is common in couples and close friendships. However, it can put a lot of pressure on a relationship. Finding a range of different people that you can ask for support

with different things can take some of this pressure off.

- ♦ Some people think that if they ask for help then other people will start to interfere and take over, or will ask for a lot in return. This doesn't give people the chance to show you that help can be positive and give a sense of relief. You can always say 'no' if someone offers you something you don't want.

Does any of this sound familiar? In Chapter 1 we saw how the way that you THINK about a situation affects the way that you feel about it. It can also affect how you behave. Have a look at the example below in which Sue needs to ask for help with carrying the shopping. There are a few different thoughts that she might have in this situation:

Thought	Feeling	Behaviour
If I ask for help I'll annoy people.	Anxious	Don't ask and try to carry it on my own.
Why isn't he helping me with this? He can see I need help and he should do it for me!	Frustrated	Demand that someone helps me.
This is too heavy for me. I need to ask someone to help.	Neutral	Ask politely for help.



As you can see, people may have lots of different thoughts in the same situation. As most of our thoughts pop into our heads automatically, we often just assume that they're true and don't stop to consider if there are other ways to think about the situation. Starting to notice your thoughts is an important skill because, as we saw in Chapter 1, depression often means your thoughts are very gloomy and negative.

'I was so down on myself all the time and would constantly tell myself that I was doing things wrong and was going to be a rubbish mum. It made me feel awful. My mind just seemed to block out any good things that happened or ignore nice things that people said as if they didn't count. The more I noticed this pattern the more I was able to make sure I took account of the good stuff!'

Do you ever find yourself thinking in some of these ways...

- ♦ She must think I'm a complete idiot!
- ♦ I'll never be able to do this.
- ♦ I'm going to be the worst mum in the world.
- ♦ No one else seems to have this problem- what's wrong with me?

These kinds of thoughts come into our heads without us even realising it and can become familiar ways of thinking. They can leave us

feeling stressed, upset and worthless. However, once you start to notice the kinds of thoughts which make you feel low or upset, you can learn to challenge them and find more helpful ways of thinking.

Look back at the example above, where Sue thinks 'If I ask for help, I'll annoy people'. Some of the other thoughts she noticed about asking for help included, 'I'll be a burden to other people', 'they're too busy to help me', 'I shouldn't ask for help'. This made her feel very anxious about the idea of asking anyone for help.

People often get 'stuck' in their thoughts in this way so that it's hard to see another perspective. The list of questions below can help to find alternatives:

Questions to challenge unhelpful thoughts

- ♦ Have I had any experiences which show that this thought is not completely true all the time?
- ♦ If a close friend had this thought, what would I tell them?
- ♦ If a close friend knew I was thinking this, what would they tell me?
- ♦ Are there any small things that contradict my thought that I'm not paying attention to?
- ♦ Am I exaggerating how bad things are?
- ♦ Am I mind-reading what other people might be thinking?
- ♦ Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I'm ignoring?

Answering some of these questions can help to find more balanced or helpful thoughts. For example, Sue was able to tell herself, *'Sometimes people are happy to help me and even offer to do more than I ask. If other people ask me to help them, I don't feel annoyed, so why should they be annoyed with me? I'm exaggerating how difficult this is. It won't take someone long to help me and it's ok for me to ask for help. I'm only human!'*

After answering these questions, Sue felt much less anxious about asking for help.

A good way to start to notice the kinds of thoughts you have is to keep a **THOUGHT DIARY**. This is a way to record the things that go through your mind when you're feeling low or upset. It also helps you notice which situations often make you feel bad and what you typically do when you feel a certain way.

Have a look at the thought diary on page 40. The first 3 rows are for you to write down how you were thinking and feeling in certain situations. The next 2 rows are for you to

think about what evidence there is **FOR** and **AGAINST** these thoughts. The last 2 rows are for you to write more balanced or helpful thoughts using the questions on the previous page, and to think about alternative emotions or feelings attached to these new thoughts.

Tip: Feelings can usually be described with one word e.g. sad, angry, upset, frustrated, disappointed. Thoughts are the things that go through your mind e.g. 'This is going to be a huge change' or 'What will my mum say?'

Box 3: Thinking traps

As described earlier, depression can lead to biases in the way you think so that you're more likely to notice negative things and assume that things will go badly. Once you start to notice these habits of thinking, or 'Thinking Traps', you can start to challenge them and find more helpful ways of seeing situations. Do you recognise any of the traps below?

Black and white thinking: Believing that things or people are either good or bad, right or wrong. There are no in betweens or shades of grey. For example, if I don't do something perfectly, I've failed.

Mind-reading: Assuming you know what other people are thinking (usually about you). For example, if someone doesn't smile at me, they don't like me.

Catastrophising: Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen. For example, I'll have a horrible birth and I won't be able to cope.

Over-generalising: Using words like 'always' and 'never' to talk about events that may have only happened a few times. For example, my partner never listens to me.

Personalisation: Assuming that things people say are directly related to you and comparing yourself negatively with others. For example, your friend complains that she's feeling irritable and you think it must be because of you.

Shoulds and musts: Putting pressure on yourself by using 'I should' and 'I must' a lot. For example, thinking you should be able to cope better or you must do everything perfectly.

See if you can notice any of these thinking traps in the thoughts that you write in your thought diary.



Communication

People's beliefs about pregnancy can be very powerful because it is such an important event. The beliefs about pregnancy in your culture or religion may be different to those of people from other backgrounds. Similarly, the ideas that your partner and friends have may be very different to those of your parents and grandparents.

These different beliefs and expectations about pregnancy can sometimes make conversations with people difficult, for example:

- ♦ People may give you unwanted advice about the pregnancy and birth.
- ♦ People may expect things from you which you don't feel able to give.
- ♦ People may have negative reactions to the pregnancy.

'My mother loved to come and help but sometimes she was more annoying than helpful. And it was kind of stressful because I didn't want to hurt her feelings but at the same time I didn't necessarily want her here that much. I didn't know how to have a conversation with her about it'

'Everyone had a different idea about what I should and shouldn't be doing, what was good for the baby, what was bad for the baby, what worked for them etc etc. It was really hard knowing which advice to

follow and I constantly felt guilty that I was doing the wrong thing. But I reminded myself that women have been doing this for millions of years and that as long as I stay healthy things would be OK'

Finding ways to communicate what you need is important both now and after the birth. How do you normally communicate in your relationships? Try to think back to some recent conversations which have been difficult or challenging in some way.

- ♦ Do you find it easy to say what you want or do you tend to 'give in' to other people?
- ♦ Do you stand up straight and make eye contact when talking about difficult topics, or do you tend to look away and feel uncomfortable?
- ♦ Do you find it easy to understand what the other person might be thinking or do you often feel confused about what's in their mind?
- ♦ Do you find yourself getting annoyed or upset when the conversation is difficult or are you able to stay calm?
- ♦ Do you usually feel satisfied and confident after talking about something difficult, or do you usually feel frustrated or disappointed?

When there is a problem in a relationship common responses are (1) keep quiet to keep the peace, or (2) wait until you're really annoyed and go in like a bull in a china shop! This can cause even more problems at a time when you need a good support network around you.

When communication works well, both people come away feeling ok. This means finding a balance between making sure you say clearly what you need and how you feel, while also keeping in mind the other person's needs and feelings.

One useful way to do this is to think ahead about possible difficult conversations and plan how you would like it to go. For example, in the first scenario above someone's mother is coming around a lot and offering help.

The first step is to be clear about what the problem is and what you would like the outcome of a conversation to be. This is the same process that you practised in Chapter 2 with other types of problems:

Problem: Mum keeps coming round all the time and telling me how to do things.

Desired outcome: Mum comes round 2-3 times a week and helps me with the things I'm struggling with.

Next, think about the steps that will get you from A to B. When thinking about problems with communication, this can be more complicated than just listing possible solutions. You might need to think more carefully about how to get what you need. Some useful prompts are given below:

The best time to have the conversation:

- ♦ We usually sit and have a cup of tea together on Saturday mornings. This is generally a calm time when we can talk.

My aims for the conversation:

- ♦ I get some help with specific things I need and also have time to myself.
- ♦ Mum agrees to only come round 2-3 times a week.
- ♦ Mum feels wanted and useful.

A good way to start that will meet my aims:

- ♦ 'Thanks so much for all your help mum. I wanted to talk with you about the things I need your support with and the things I can do ok on my own....'

Problems that might come up e.g. the other person's response, feelings they may have, my own negative reactions:

- ♦ Mum is upset or angry that I don't want her round so much.
- ♦ I think she's telling me I'm not good enough
- ♦ I feel guilty and back down.

How I will respond to these:

- ♦ Tell her again how much I appreciate her.
- ♦ Ask her to see things from my point of view.
- ♦ Be clear about what I do and don't need help with.

Other useful ways I can prepare or respond to get what I need:

- ♦ Ask a friend to help me think of good ways to handle the situation.
- ♦ Take a few deep breaths and make sure I'm calm before talking.
- ♦ Keep an eye on how mum is feeling and reassure her if she looks upset.

Of course this doesn't guarantee that you'll get everything you need! But thinking ahead about conversations that may be difficult has lots of advantages:

- ♦ It can improve your relationships so there is less conflict or resentment.
- ♦ It can make you feel more confident and sure of yourself.
- ♦ It makes it more likely you'll get what you need in relationships.

■ **Problem:**


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■ **Desired outcome:**



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■ **The best time to have the conversation:**




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■ **My aims for the conversation:**



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■ **A good way to start that will meet my aims:**




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■ **Problems that might come up e.g. the other person's response, feelings they may have, my own negative reactions:**



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■ How I will respond to these:



■ Other useful ways I can prepare or respond to get what I need:



Did you know...?

Changing your body posture not only affects how other people see you, it can also affect how you feel about yourself! Standing tall with your head up and your shoulders back has been shown to reduce feelings of stress and make people feel more confident. Try it out!

The table below gives some more suggestions for good communication:



- ♦ Choose to talk when you have time and are relaxed.
- ♦ Use 'I' statements. This means clearly stating your needs, wants or feelings by starting sentences with 'I'
e.g. *'I feel upset about what happened.'*
'I'd like to have some time on my own.'
'I like it when you help me with that.'
- ♦ Listen to the other person without interrupting.
- ♦ Let the other person know you understand their point of view
e.g. *'I know that you're busy but I'd really appreciate your help with this.'*
'I understand that this is hard for you too, and I want us to be able to support each other.'



- ♦ Blame the other person, use sarcasm or putdowns.
- ♦ Raise your voice or shout.
- ♦ Focus too much on the past. Think about what you want to happen now and in the future.
e.g. *'Could you pick up some milk on your way home?'* rather than *'You never buy anything for the house'*
- ♦ Give up and just agree with the other person to keep the peace.
- ♦ Start an important conversation when you only have 5 minutes.

Your partner

Lots of people who have babies are not in 'traditional' relationships or marriages. You may be single, living separately from your partner, be in a same-sex relationship or part of a step family. The word 'partner' here refers to a person who is close to you that might be involved in bringing up your baby. This may be the baby's father, a boyfriend, girlfriend or close relative.

Having a baby affects your relationships because suddenly there is an extra person to think about. You may be more emotional or tired than usual, need to ask for help more, or have worries about how your relationships will change. Your partner will probably also have worries about the situation which you may not be aware of. This is true even if it's not your first baby as many things are changing and you may both have different worries or ideas about this.

Set a goal: Put some time aside to discuss with your partner what your thoughts are about being pregnant and becoming a mum. This includes sharing your own thoughts and also finding out what your partner thinks.

Tip: Try using some of the ideas for good communication above to have this conversation e.g. make sure you have time, talk calmly and make sure you both have a chance to listen to each other's views.

Being depressed can also affect your relationships. Partners might think you are feeling low because they've done something wrong or it's their fault. They may not know how to help you and might end up feeling frustrated or low themselves.

'I thought that Mark should know how I feel and what I need because he loves me. I guess I was falling into the mind-reading trap- expecting him to be able to read my mind! Things became much easier when I started to tell him how I was feeling and what I wanted him to do'.

'My partner started to become really distant from me during my pregnancy. I thought that he was going off me because I wasn't as much fun anymore and was putting on weight. Then eventually he told me that he felt bad about not knowing the best way to support me and was worried that I wouldn't love him as much after the baby came. Once we had that conversation we were able to find ways to look after each other and become more of a partnership'.

Use the questions below to think about how you and your partner let each other know how you're feeling. People show support and care in different ways. Some people use WORDS; they say nice things and tell you how they feel. Some people use ACTIONS; they do nice things and behave in supportive ways. Some people use TIME; they put time aside to spend with you and make themselves available.

■ **How do you show your partner that you care about them? Think of a few examples.**



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■ **How does your partner show that he/she cares about you?**



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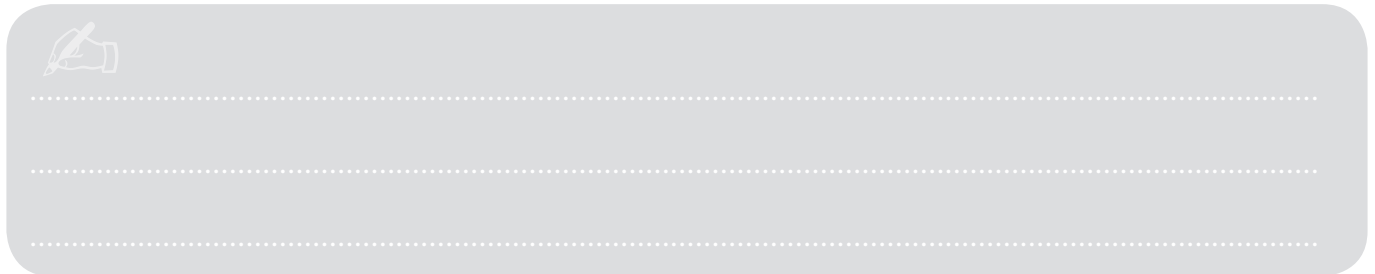
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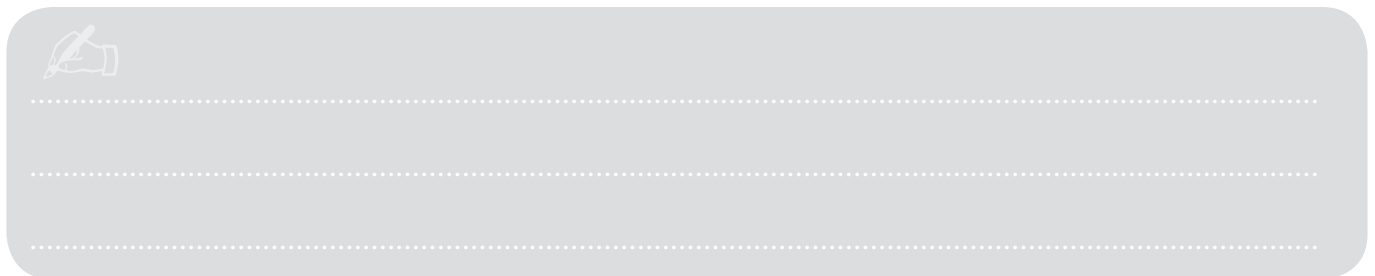
People deal with emotions in different ways. Some people don't like expressing negative emotions such as anger, so will keep things inside. Other people can get very loud and

aggressive when they're angry. Similarly, some people become withdrawn when they're sad, just wanting to be on their own. Other people want company and a hug when they're feeling low.

■ **How do you deal with emotions such as anger and sadness? Think of a few examples.**



■ **What about your partner?**



People deal with disagreements in different ways. Some people feel very upset if their partner disagrees with them and become angry

or withdrawn. Some people want to keep talking until they can find a solution, while other people want to go away and think about it on their own.

■ **How do you deal with disagreements?**



■ **How does your partner deal with them?**



The best way to let your partner know how you feel and what you need is to tell them. Nobody can read minds! If you feel able to, share this section with your partner and see what their thoughts are about the examples

you've given. Can they think of more examples? If it seems like there are problems in the way you each express yourselves, see if you can use your problem-solving skills to deal with this.

Tried and tested ways of improving communication

Here are some of the methods that other women have used to keep communication going through the transition to parenthood:

'I made some simple changes to the way I said things and it made a huge difference! For example, instead of saying, 'You make me feel upset when you do this' I would say 'I feel upset when you do this', or instead of 'You always do this' I would say 'Could you try doing this instead, please?' So small but it meant my partner didn't feel like I was blaming or nagging him.'

'We made sure we had at least 20-30 minutes of time each day to talk to each other. We even had some rules, like I could talk for 5 minutes without being interrupted and then the same for my partner. It was weird at first but it meant we always knew we would be listened to.'

'I made sure I let my mum know every time she did something helpful or nice by saying thank you or giving her a hug. That way she knew what I liked and it also made me feel less guilty about telling her when she was doing something unhelpful!'

■ What do you think will be useful for you and your partner to make communication easier?



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SUMMARY

In this chapter you have thought about how you can get support during your pregnancy, you have learned about ways to improve communication, and also thought about the way you communicate with your partner.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- ♦ Talk to someone: This chapter is all about communication and there are prompts throughout to encourage you to reach out to others and specifically to increase good communication with your partner. Take time to do these tasks this week and notice the effects that this has on your relationships.
- ♦ Balance your thoughts: Complete the thought diary this week when you notice that you're feeling low.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO THAT'S HELPFUL?

- ♦ Relax: Remember to keep doing the relaxation and breathing exercises on a regular basis and also anytime that you feel stressed.
- ♦ Set a goal: There is another blank activity schedule at the end of this chapter. What will you decide to do this week? Remember it's best to have a mixture of things including activities you enjoy and that give you a sense of achievement.
- ♦ Children's Centres often run groups and provide services for pregnant women, as well as offering advice about other local services. Look online to find your local children's centre and find out what they're offering. These can also be places to meet other pregnant women who are going through some of the same changes as you.

Box 4: Feeling safe in relationships

'Domestic abuse' means physical, sexual or emotional abuse by someone who is close to you. Examples include being bullied, threatened or put down, being controlled by not being allowed access to money, a phone, or family/friends, being physically assaulted, or being forced into unwanted sex. This is also sometimes called domestic violence. Domestic abuse is more common than you might think- 1 in 4 women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime.

Some people don't realise that they are victims of domestic abuse, perhaps because they love the person who is abusing them, the relationship is affectionate sometimes, they might think it's 'normal' to be treated that way, or they don't want to believe that it's happening to them.

Also, some people might not want to ask for help, perhaps because they think no one will believe them, they are scared about the consequences, or worried about children being taken away. However, everyone has the right to live free from violence or fear.

Domestic abuse can start or get worse in pregnancy. A physical injury may hurt the baby as well as you and even the emotional stress of being the victim of psychological abuse can affect your baby. If the abuse continues after the baby is born, the baby will be at risk of abuse too. It's important to recognise if this is happening to you so you can get advice and help from services who are expert in this issue.

Ways to recognise you may be experiencing domestic abuse:

- ♦ Has anyone put you down or made you feel bad recently?
- ♦ Has anyone at home done things that scare you?
- ♦ Does anyone try to control what you do or who you see?
- ♦ Has anyone at home ever hurt you, hit you or threatened you?

If you've answered 'yes' to any of the questions above, you may be a victim of domestic abuse. You are not alone and there are many sources of help where you can get free, confidential advice and support. Let your therapist know and they will help you decide what to do next.

The following services exist to help you:

Freephone 24 hour National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

In London: www.solacewomensaid.org


Tel: 0808 802 5565

Anywhere in the UK: www.refuge.org.uk

The people at these services will listen to you and make sure they understand things from your point of view. They will give you choices about what to do next and help you think about what is best for you and your baby.

Thought Diary

Week beginning:

Situation <i>What was happening?</i> <i>Who was around?</i>		
Emotions or feelings		
Thoughts <i>What was going through your mind?</i>		
Evidence that supports the thoughts		
Evidence that does not support the thoughts		
Balanced / helpful alternative thoughts		
Alternative emotions or feelings		

Activity Planner

Week beginning:

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening





4.

Getting to know your baby

In the last chapter you learned how to improve communication and challenge unhelpful thoughts. Your tasks included completing a thought diary and sharing parts of the chapter with someone close to you. How did you get on?

In this chapter, we will look at your relationship with your baby and what it means to think about becoming a parent to this new child.

If you've had a previous miscarriage or still birth this may be hard to think about. Box 5 on page 46 gives more information about this.

Bringing the baby to mind

How big is your baby at the moment? Can you feel him/her moving around yet? Does she/he respond to music and touch? Babies grow and develop at an enormous rate and are constantly changing. Being aware of these changes can help you to feel that you are slowly getting to know your baby.

Did you know...?

You can track the changes that both your baby and your body are going through on these websites. Have a look at the sections that are relevant to how many weeks pregnant you are:

<http://www.emmasdiary.co.uk/pregnancy-and-birth/pregnancy>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/pregnancy-and-baby-care.aspx>



You might have thoughts about what your new baby will be like or how she/he will make you feel. These thoughts are often related to your own past experience, your mood and your culture or religion. These may also be different depending on if your pregnancy was planned or not, or if this is your first baby.

Some women think about their baby all the

time and are constantly imagining what he/she will be like, while other women hardly think about their baby at all until after the birth. Similarly, some women find it easy to have lots of positive, caring thoughts about the baby early on, while other women have more worried or uncertain thoughts. Put a cross on the line where you think you are at the moment:

I hardly ever think about my baby and I don't have an idea of what it's like.

I'm always thinking about my baby and spend a lot of time imagining what it's like.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

When I think about my baby I feel quite uncertain and worried.

When I think about my baby I feel very warm and positive.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It's likely that your position on these lines will change at different times during your pregnancy. For example, as you get closer to your due date you may spend more time imagining what your baby will be like. Your position may also change depending on your mood. For example, if you're feeling low then your thoughts might be more uncertain.

Many women have dreams and fantasies about their pregnancy or the baby that can seem strange or even disturbing, but are actually very common. Your mind is trying to make sense of this new experience.

'I had loads of weird dreams about the baby. In one, the baby was coming out through my stomach

wall and I couldn't keep him in. In others he would come out and be speaking a different language that I couldn't understand. I think these all reflected my fears about whether I was ready for this baby and if I would be able to bond with him.'

'I couldn't let go of the idea that there was something wrong with my baby. I kept thinking it would be deformed in some way or would die, and that it would be my fault because my body wasn't good enough to make a healthy baby. It was such a relief to find out that lots of women have similar thoughts.'

The following questions may help you to think about some of your beliefs and expectations about your pregnancy:

- **Have you started to think about your baby as a person? If so, when did this happen? What are you imagining about your baby?**



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- **What are your thoughts about having a boy or girl? How do you imagine them?**



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- **Imagine what your baby is like now, but also what it will be like after he or she is born and as a child. What pictures come into your mind?**



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■ **What expectations, hopes and fears do you have for your baby?**



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■ **How much do you include your baby in your daily activities e.g. talking to him/her, stroking your tummy, playing music and noticing how he/she reacts?**



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People’s thoughts about their baby can be influenced by lots of different things, from religious or cultural ideas, to ideas from popular magazines and internet sites. You might also be influenced by what your partner or friends think about your baby, or by dreams and fantasies about what your baby will be like.

‘I knew that I was having a girl and I remember having really set ideas about wanting her to be strong and independent. I think it’s because I’m a bit of a feminist so I thought she should be too. But I realised I can’t choose her personality! In the end I just want her to feel loved and safe.’

‘I’d had a miscarriage in my previous pregnancy and so I was really scared of losing my baby again. I didn’t start thinking about him as a person until really late because I was trying to protect myself in case it happened again.’

■ **Look back at your answers to the questions above. What do you think are some of the influences on your thoughts about your baby?**



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■ **Who else do you know who has been pregnant? What do you imagine some of their answers to the questions above might be? Is there anyone you can ask to find out some of the thoughts they had about their baby while they were pregnant?**



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Box 5: Previous pregnancies

Losing a child because of miscarriage or stillbirth can be a painful and traumatic experience. A previous termination of pregnancy may also be linked to a mixture of emotions. Past experiences can also mean that further pregnancies are difficult emotionally. The excitement of becoming pregnant again may be overshadowed by worries that you will lose this baby, so you may find yourself being very careful and anxious to keep your developing baby safe. You may also have worries that your body is somehow 'not good enough' to carry a baby, which can lead to sadness and feelings of worthlessness. Some women also

find themselves re-experiencing feelings of loss and grief for the previous child as the new pregnancy brings up painful memories. These feelings are understandable given what has happened and you are not alone. Talking to someone about how you are feeling is an important step in being able to adjust to your new pregnancy.

*Who do you know who will be able to listen to your fears openly and support you through this? This might be a close friend or relative, or your midwife or GP. The following organisation has information about sources of support:
www.uk-sands.org.*

Making changes for your baby

Whether this is your first pregnancy or you already have children, having a baby is a big change and it will affect lots of areas of your life. People often find their normal ways of doing things are challenged and they have to find new ways to think and behave to make space for the new person coming into their lives.

Lisa: *'I had quite a few health problems while I was pregnant which made it difficult to move around or do things for myself. That meant I often had to ask other people to help me, which I found really hard. I realised that I generally didn't ask other people for help because I always felt like a burden and didn't want to bother them. I had to get over that!'*

Karen: *'I didn't want to have to give anything up because of having a baby, so was still working full time and trying to do everything perfectly, even though I was really tired. I thought that I would look weak if I stopped doing things just because I was pregnant. But I found myself getting really irritable and would often snap at my partner for really small things. It had a bad effect on our relationship. I had to accept that I couldn't do everything and needed to take time to relax.'*

We all have certain 'rules' about how we behave and also how we expect others to behave towards us. These rules might come from our past experiences, from our personality, or from our beliefs about ourselves. Often we are not really aware of them as they are not written down anywhere, but we act as if they were true. In the examples above, the rules might be:

Lisa: *'If I ask for help, people will be annoyed with me.'* *'I shouldn't ask for help.'*

Karen: *'If I don't do everything perfectly, people will think I'm weak.'* *'I should always try to be perfect.'*

Quite often these rules are unhelpful because they limit the way we think and can leave us feeling anxious or upset if we can't live by them. Therefore, it's a good idea to try and identify what some of your rules are and think about whether they are helpful or not. This is especially the case when you're having a baby as lots of things are changing and it might be hard to keep up all your rules. Below are examples of rules that other women have identified and some of the issues that came up for them when they had a baby. Do you recognise any of these in yourself?

'I must do things quickly or people will think I'm incompetent.' Well, that was impossible in my last trimester! I was so big it took me ages to do anything but, surprisingly, no one seemed to mind.

'If I relax, it shows that I am lazy.' I completely exhausted myself trying to follow this rule. In fact, I almost collapsed from over-exertion, which was not good for the baby. I realised that taking care of myself was also taking care of the baby.

'I shouldn't treat myself because I haven't earned it.' I told myself I didn't deserve to do anything nice because I was 'bad' for not enjoying my pregnancy. But I had everything backwards because I couldn't enjoy it until I did something nice!

'If I tell people how I feel, they will reject me.' I really thought that I wasn't allowed to feel down when


I was pregnant because it's meant to be such a joyful time. Then one day I started crying in front of my sister-in-law. She gave me a big hug and was really sympathetic. It felt great to tell someone and get some reassurance.

'If I try, then I will only fail.' I really got to the stage of thinking there was no point in doing anything. Then my midwife suggested playing music to my bump- the baby would move around when she heard it, which was such a nice feeling. It made me realise I can make good things happen.


Challenging unhelpful rules

What kinds of rules do you have? What do you criticise yourself for or tend to dwell on? What are some of your worries about how others might see you?

■ Write down your ideas about what some of your rules might be:


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■ Can you think of any ways in which your rules might be unhelpful or difficult to keep up either during pregnancy or after the birth?


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Once you know what your rule is and how it might be unhelpful to you, you're in a good position to find a more balanced rule. This is similar to what you did in Chapter 3 when you developed balanced thoughts in your thought diary. Look back at page 29 to see some of the questions that helped you do this.

■ Have a go at balancing your rule like the examples below:

Rule: *'I shouldn't ask for help.'*

Challenge: *'Everyone needs help sometimes and it doesn't have to mean that I'm weak or a burden. It's normal to need other people, especially when I'm pregnant and can't do all the things I used to do. In fact, lots of people like to be asked for help because it makes them feel good to be useful!'*

Balanced rule: *If I need help, it's fine to ask other people*

Rule: *'I must do everything perfectly.'*

Challenge: *'It's impossible to do everything perfectly! Everyone is good at some things and not so good at others. I'm bound to struggle a bit as becoming a mum is a new experience and I don't have any practice.'*

Balanced rule: *It's ok to do things well rather than perfectly*

■ Your rule:


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■ Challenge:


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■ Balanced rule:


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Imagine how things are when you are living by your new rule. What are you doing differently? What do other people notice? Think about how you can put the new, balanced rule into practice in everyday life. In the examples above this might include making a point of asking several people for help over the next week, or deliberately doing

something imperfectly and seeing what happens e.g. turning up late to meet someone or making a spelling mistake. How can you put your new rule into practice? Set a goal: Think of 2-3 things you can do this week that will be in line with a more balanced rule. Be patient with yourself when you do this – it can take time to change these rules.

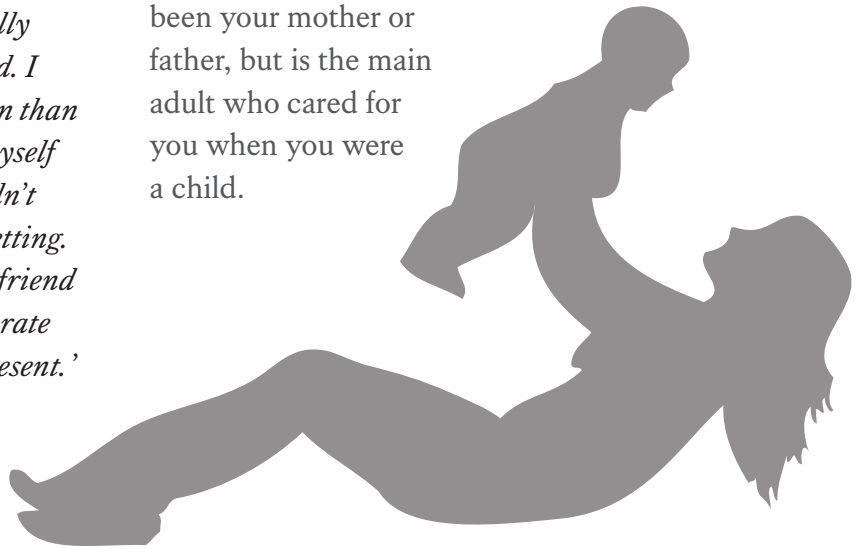
Learning to be a parent

Pregnancy can be a time when you start to think more about your own childhood and your relationship with your parents. This is normal as you move from being someone who has parents to someone who is a parent. You may start to think about whether you want to do things the same as or different from your own parents, and whether you're happy with the way you were brought up. If you already have children, you may be thinking about whether you want to do things in a similar or different way from your last child.

'The process of becoming a mum made me really aware of the things I'd missed out on as a child. I was determined to be a better mother to my son than my mum had been to me. However, I found myself battling with feelings of resentment that I hadn't had the love and attention that my son was getting. Luckily I was able to talk all this over with a friend and sort it out in my mind so that I could separate what was in the past from what was in the present.'

Depression can make these thoughts difficult as you may take quite a gloomy view about your ability to be a parent. Understanding where some of your thoughts come from and what they mean to you can help to process this and make you feel more able to make decisions about the sort of mother you would like to be.

The following questions may help you to think about how your experiences have influenced your ideas about parenthood and becoming a mother. The word 'parent' is used to refer to the main person or people who brought you up. This may not have been your mother or father, but is the main adult who cared for you when you were a child.



- **What are some of your strongest memories of being a child? Who are you with? What's important about these memories for you? Why do you think your mind has held on to these memories above others?**



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- **How did your parents respond to you if you were upset/ scared/ angry/ excited?**



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■ **How did they discipline you?**



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■ **What values or experiences do you think influenced your parents' ways of bringing you up?**



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■ **What did you like and dislike about how you were brought up?**



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■ **Thinking about your answers to the questions above, which things that your parents did would you like to use yourself and which things would you like to do differently?**



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■ **There is no such thing as a 'perfect' mother. All parents make mistakes and have to try and do their best in whatever circumstances they are in. Taking into consideration your experiences of being parented and also your own values and beliefs, what is your idea of being a 'good enough' mother?**



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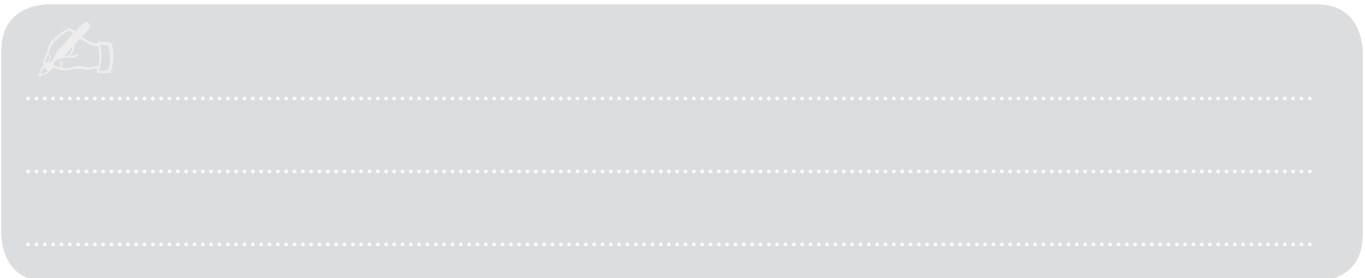
■ How will you show you care for your baby?



■ How will you respond when your baby cries?



■ How will you help your baby learn about right and wrong?



What do you think your partner’s answers to some of these questions may be? Do they have the same ideas as you? Share this section with your partner and see what their ideas about being a ‘good enough’ parent are. If there are differences, think about where these have come from and how you can ensure you work as a team.

Tip: Remember the section about communication from chapter 3? Conversations about how to bring up a child can be difficult, so think about what message you want to give and make sure that you both have time to talk and listen to each other.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we thought about your relationship with your baby, where some of your ideas about parenting might have come from, and what your ideas about being a 'good enough' mother are.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE


- ♦ Identify your rules and practice your new, more balanced rules: how will you put your more balanced rules into practice?

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO THAT'S HELPFUL?

- ♦ Talk to someone: who will you share this chapter with?
- ♦ Balance your thoughts: keep using your thought diary when you notice you're feeling low. How do you feel after finding a more balanced thought?
- ♦ Plan activities: what sorts of things will you put in your activity planner this week? Don't forget to include relaxation and doing something you enjoy.

Thought Diary

Week beginning:

Situation <i>What was happening?</i> <i>Who was around?</i>		
Emotions or feelings		
Thoughts <i>What was going through your mind?</i>		
Evidence that supports the thoughts		
Evidence that does not support the thoughts		
Balanced / helpful alternative thoughts		
Alternative emotions or feelings		

Activity Planner

Week beginning:

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening





5.

Health and lifestyle

In the last chapter you had a chance to think about your relationship with your baby and what it might mean to become a parent. Your task was to put your more balanced rule into practice. How did you get on?

In this chapter we will look at how you can look after your health and wellbeing during pregnancy, ensuring that both you and the baby stay healthy.

Stress and coping strategies

If there is ever a time in your life when you need to take care of yourself it's now! Being pregnant and having a baby takes up lots of energy and resources, so it's important to take time to nurture yourself and make sure that your body is getting what it needs at this time. This can be difficult if you find yourself trying to take lots of advice, attend appointments, keep up with work, manage any health issues and continue with the daily tasks of living. But learning to manage stress and keep yourself healthy is useful both now and after the birth.

The key idea is to find a way to have a BALANCED lifestyle. It's important for your wellbeing and mental health to keep doing the things that are meaningful to you and it's important for your body to get some level of physical activity. However, it's also necessary to find time to relax and put your feet up, and to know when you need a rest or need to ask for help.



Do you remember Karen from chapter 4?

'I didn't want to have to give anything up because of having a baby, so was still working full time and trying to do everything perfectly, even though I was really tired. I thought that I would look weak if I stopped doing things just because I was pregnant. But I found myself getting really irritable and would often snap at my partner for really small things. It had a bad effect on our relationship. I had to accept that I couldn't do everything and needed to take time to relax'

At the other end of the scale, Tara from chapter 1: *'I just felt really unmotivated and tired all the time so I didn't feel like doing anything. It was hard to make decisions about even simple things, like what to wear or what to have for lunch, so I started doing less and less. Then, of course, that made me feel really useless and like I was a failure. It also meant that everyday tasks were piling up until it just felt overwhelming to even think about trying to do them'*



The aim is to move more towards the middle of this scale and the good news is - you've already started doing this! The following things from previous chapters are good ways to help keep balance in your life and manage stress. Put a tick next to the ones that you're already doing:

- Relaxation and breathing exercises (chapter 1): this is a great way to reduce tension and focus on you.
- Do something you find pleasurable (chapter 2): this ensures that you have a chance to do

things that make you feel good.

- Challenge overly negative thoughts and find a more balanced view (chapter 3).
- Talk to someone (chapter 3): being around other people can distract you from worries and give you a chance to hear a different perspective.
- Ask for support with things you find difficult (chapter 3): asking others for help can take the pressure off you.

■ **What could you do to move more towards the middle of this scale?**



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■ **What else have you done in the past to help you feel good and manage stress?**



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Managing your health in pregnancy

During pregnancy women are given lots of information and messages about their health. This can be overwhelming and leave people feeling guilty if they are not following all the advice.

What are the main messages and recommendations that you have been given about:

■ **Diet and eating**



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■ **Activity levels and exercise**



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■ **Smoking**



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■ **Drinking alcohol**



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■ **Any others?**



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More on this...?

If you're not sure what the messages are or can't remember them, Tommy's website is really useful: www.tommys.org click on '*pregnancy information*', then '*a healthy pregnancy*' to get lots of useful information about all the things above.

Healthy start vouchers

Do you know about Healthy Start vouchers? Some women are eligible to get free vouchers to spend on milk, and fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables during pregnancy. Have a look at the website to see if you're eligible and what other advice is available to you:
www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Look back at the things above. Put a line under the ones you're already doing. Put a star* next to the ones that you'd like to improve on. The chart below can be used to start taking small steps towards the health goals that you want to improve on. Have a look at the examples and add your own goals:

Tip: Remember the SMART goals from chapter 2? Have a look back at page 19 and make sure your health goals are SMART.

Health recommendation I want to improve on	One thing I can do this week to work towards this	My goal for the next month
<i>Eat less sugar</i>	<i>Change my cereal to a less sugary one</i>	<i>Stop buying fizzy drinks and drink more water</i>
<i>Be more active</i>	<i>Go for a walk in the park</i>	<i>Get off the bus one stop early for work.</i>

Change is hard! Some ideas are given below to help you think about small changes you can make and how to keep them up.

How to fit exercise in to your day

Here are some tips for adding exercise into your daily routine:

- ♦ Walk instead of taking the bus, or get off a couple of stops early.
- ♦ Take the stairs instead of the lift.
- ♦ Put on some fast music while you do housework and turn it into a workout
- ♦ Go for a brisk walk
- ♦ Do some squats or use tins of food as weights while watching TV

Myth busters

Doing exercise will hurt the baby.
FALSE! A moderate level of physical activity won't do any harm and is actually recommended. It can also lift your mood. Check with your midwife or GP if you're unsure about how much you should do.

Tips for managing weight in pregnancy

- ♦ If you make changes to your diet, choose small, manageable goals each day
- ♦ Distract yourself- if you tend to eat when you're bored or feeling low then try distracting yourself by making tea, going for a walk, reading a magazine etc.
- ♦ Go food shopping when you're full so that hunger won't affect your choices!
- ♦ Let other people know your goals so that they can support you

Steps to better health

Have you ever used a pedometer? This is a device that counts how many steps you do in a day. You can buy one for a couple of pounds or get a free app on your phone. Measure how many steps you usually do and then plan to increase your steps gradually, aiming eventually for around 10,000 a day. Sounds like a lot? It's easier than you think!

'I found it hard to motivate myself to get out of the house and exercise because I wasn't used to it. So my friend bought me a pedometer, which counts how many steps you do. I set myself goals to do 500 extra steps a day and was soon desperate to get out of the house so that I could fit in all the steps!'

Myth busters

You need to eat a lot more than usual during pregnancy as you're 'eating for two'
FALSE! Energy needs don't change in the first 6 months of pregnancy and only go up a bit in the last 3 months (about 200 calories a day).

Tips to help you reduce alcohol

- ♦ Tell your partner, family and friends that you are not drinking and ask them to support you.
- ♦ If you're going to a party, take your favourite non-alcoholic drink.
- ♦ Meet friends in a cafe rather than a pub or bar so you won't be tempted.

If you drank heavily before you realised you were pregnant and are worried about the effect on your baby, contact your midwife and let them know your concerns. The recommendation is to avoid alcohol from when you find out you're pregnant. This is the safest approach for you and your baby.

Effective ways to help you stop smoking

- ♦ Ask your doctor or midwife to refer you to a 'Stop smoking advisor'.
- ♦ Tell your partner, family and friends that you're quitting and ask them to help you e.g. don't offer you cigarettes etc.
- ♦ Put up post-it notes to remind you why you're quitting.
- ♦ Congratulate yourself for each day that you don't smoke.
- ♦ Put the money you normally spend on cigarettes to one side and buy things for you and the baby.

- ♦ Distract yourself - when you want a cigarette phone a friend, go for a walk or even brush your teeth.

Many pregnancies are unplanned or undiscovered for the first few weeks. In this case, you may have been smoking before you realised you were pregnant. Although it's not advisable to smoke in pregnancy, it's never too late to stop smoking. Stopping will have lots of benefits for the health of your baby and also for you.

Changing habits can be difficult!

What will help you stick to your plan?

- ♦ Use your activity planner to plan the week ahead
- ♦ Tell other people and ask them to help
- ♦ Give yourself a reward when you complete tasks
- ♦ Be kind to yourself if you don't achieve everything.
- ♦ Ask yourself: What got in the way? How will I deal with this if it happens again?



SUMMARY

In this chapter you have reviewed ways to manage stress and thought about how to work towards your health goals.

If you have any specific questions or concerns about the health advice or your own health then the best thing to do is contact your midwife. The number is in your hand held notes.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE


♦ Plan activities: There are now lots of things to include in your weekly planner: relaxation, activities that need to be done and also ones that are enjoyable, talking to someone about your progress, and taking steps towards your health goals.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO THAT'S USEFUL?

- ♦ Talk to someone: Remember to share what you've been doing with someone else. Who will be able to encourage you to make the changes suggested in this chapter?
- ♦ Relax: Keep using the relaxation exercises
- ♦ Balance your thoughts: Keep up your skills with the thought diary. The more you practice this the more you will find yourself doing it naturally as thoughts come in and out of your mind.
- ♦ Do you know about other sources of support and help for pregnant women? The best way to find out more about pregnancy and meet other women is to go to antenatal classes. Find out from your midwife when and where these are.

Thought Diary

Week beginning:

Situation <i>What was happening?</i> <i>Who was around?</i>		
Emotions or feelings		
Thoughts <i>What was going through your mind?</i>		
Evidence that supports the thoughts		
Evidence that does not support the thoughts		
Balanced / helpful alternative thoughts		
Alternative emotions or feelings		

Activity Planner

Week beginning:

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening





6.

Thinking ahead to parenthood

In the last chapter you thought about how to manage stress and what you can do to stay healthy during your pregnancy. Your task was to include steps towards your health goals in your activity planner. How did you get on?

This chapter will bring together some of the ideas from previous chapters and help you to think ahead to the birth and parenthood.

Anticipating childbirth

Is childbirth a beautiful, natural event that your body has been designed for? Or is it a painful medical procedure, full of discomfort and indignity? Most women's views fall somewhere between these two extremes but, whatever your approach, it's likely that you have some fears about what the birth will be like and what your experience will be, whether this is your first baby or not.

'I had so many worries about the birth, it felt overwhelming: Would I be able to cope with the pain? Would I lose control and humiliate myself somehow? And the biggest fear of all- would my baby be normal? I didn't know how to share these fears with other people because it always seemed like I wasn't supposed to have them.'

These kinds of worries are completely normal. If this is your first pregnancy, when you start your antenatal classes (check the dates with

your midwife) you'll be able to talk to the midwife about the different ways you can give birth and some of the pain relief that will be available to you. You'll also be able to talk to other pregnant women to find out their thoughts about giving birth. In the meantime, **if you have specific worries about the birth, write them down below** and get in contact with your midwife who will be able to give you advice. You'll probably find that lots of other women have had the same fears as you:



If you've had a difficult birth before this doesn't mean that you'll have a difficult birth again. Being stressed can make labour more difficult so using your new relaxation and thought challenging skills can be very helpful!

Using your skills to deal with difficulties

Throughout this workbook, you've learned lots of skills to help you deal with difficult emotions and worries. These include:

- ♦ Relaxation techniques: these will be really useful during labour to help you reduce tension and focus on your breathing.
- ♦ Problem solving: finding positive, practical ways to deal with problems puts you in control and can stop you feeling overwhelmed.

- ♦ Balancing your thoughts: what are some of your thoughts about the birth? Check if you're falling into any thinking traps and practise finding some balanced alternatives.
- ♦ Recognising your rules: it's normal to need to ask for help, to feel uncertain and even to feel a bit out of control during labour. Are any of these going to be particularly difficult for you given your rules? Think of a more balanced rule in advance and practise it.
- ♦ Talking to someone: who is going to be with you at the birth? Let this person know how you're feeling and what they can do to help.
- ♦ Communicating clearly: make sure that the midwives and doctors at your birth know about your birth plan and what you want.

Making a Birth Plan

Most women have an idea about the kind of birth they would like to have e.g. in a birthing pool, at hospital, at home etc. Before the birth you'll be able to make a birth plan with your midwife to say the sorts of things that you do and don't want to happen. This is important to help you think through how your labour will be. However, it's also important to keep in mind that things don't always go to plan. It's common for the birth plan to have to change if, for example, the baby comes very quickly, the baby is very overdue, or there are some complications. If this happens, you can use some of the coping strategies you've learned to support you e.g. relaxation and breathing, balancing negative thoughts, and communicating assertively about your needs.

'I was a bit fixed on having an 'ideal birth' with photos of me with the baby straight afterwards, and was shocked when the baby wasn't given to me immediately. It was because he needed some tests but everything was OK. Now I think that the main thing is that he's healthy, and next time I would be a bit more flexible about my expectations.'

What about after the birth?

After the birth, most people expect an instant bond with their baby, but for more than half of new mothers, this doesn't happen. This can create feelings of guilt, stress and disappointment. However, it may take a few days or even weeks to feel a connection to your baby. It's important to remember that every relationship is different and it can take time to get to know your baby and understand his or her needs.

All parents go through a period of adjustment as they try to handle the huge changes a baby brings. This is true whether it's your first baby or if you already have children. It is common to feel more emotional in the days following the birth — this is



known as the 'baby blues' and it affects around 80 per cent of women. Women with the baby blues may feel tearful and overwhelmed due to changes in hormone levels following childbirth. Signs of the baby blues include being teary, irritable or oversensitive in your interactions with others, and having lots of mood changes. This usually goes away after a few days. If it doesn't, you'll be able to use some of the strategies in this workbook to help you balance your mood. You can also talk to your midwife, GP or health visitor about getting support.

More on this...?

Box 6 overleaf highlights other common problems that new parents face and provides some advice about how to deal with them.

Box 6: Common problems for new parents

Health

Your physical health can be affected by both the pregnancy and the birth. Physical health problems that women face include low lying placenta, gestational diabetes, anaemia, post surgery complications, or mastitis. These can range in severity but they can affect how easy it is to cope. Make sure you let your midwife or GP know if you are in pain or unsure about any physical health problem. Getting support from family and friends is also important, especially if your movement is restricted. Don't be afraid to ask for help!

Mood changes

Of course your mood may also be affected by the birth. As mentioned above, many women experience the 'baby blues' during the first couple of weeks after birth where they may feel teary and upset. This is quite normal, but if low mood persists then get support from those around you – ask others to help with caring for the baby or doing other tasks, and talk to someone about how you're feeling. If you're worried that your mood has been low for longer than a couple of weeks then talk to your GP, midwife or health visitor about what you've noticed.

Finance

Having a baby puts an extra financial burden on the family. If you're struggling with finances, use the problem solving strategies from chapter 2 to help find solutions – identify the problem, brainstorm lots of possible solutions, pick the one most likely to have good consequences, and try

it out. Remember to ask other people for possible solutions too- they might know sources of help that you are not aware of. Also, see page 76 for details about the Citizen's Advice Bureau who can give advice about financial difficulties.

Isolation

Many new mothers feel isolated after the birth. You may have stopped work, find it hard to get out of the house, or feel you've lost touch with friends who are not mothers. This can lead to frustration, loneliness and boredom. Look back at chapter 3 where you wrote down all the different people around you and who gives you the different things you need. Who can you get in touch with for a chat, go for a walk with, ask to come and watch a film with you? There may also be local groups in your area, or children's centres where you can meet other new mums.

Exhaustion

Giving birth is extremely demanding on your body, and that's just the start! Your hormones will be in flux, your baby will need night time feeds and you'll need to respond to your baby's needs throughout the day. This can be tiring so get your problem-solving skills going in advance to think about how you can deal with this and what support you have. For example, can you delegate some tasks to other people? Are there some things that are less important to do and can be left for another day? Can someone else do night time nappy changes? Remember, previous rules such as having to have a perfectly clean house may not be helpful right now! Put your health and the health of your baby first.

Planning ahead

In Chapter 2 you learned how to problem-solve by thinking of lots of possible solutions to a problem and then trying them out to see what works best. You can also problem-solve in advance. Have a look at the list of typical problems that new parents face and think of a few possible solutions for each one. Add your own if you can think of others that might come up. If you've had children before, what problems did you face last time? What solutions did you find?

Problem	Possible solution
<i>People keep giving different advice</i>	<i>Ask people to stop giving advice Find one trusted source and stick with it Try out different things and see what works best for me</i>
<i>Baby only sleeps for short periods</i>	<i>Sleep when baby sleeps</i>
<i>Breastfeeding is painful/difficult</i>	
<i>Getting irritable with partner</i>	

Will I still be me?


One of the themes throughout this workbook has been the idea of BALANCE, both in your thoughts and your actions. This is also important after the birth as you will need to give a lot of time and resources to your baby but will also need to look after yourself. Hopefully you've managed to

think of lots of activities that are meaningful and important to you as part of your activity planning. You've also been practising doing things such as relaxation and exercise to keep yourself healthy during the pregnancy. What will happen to these things once you've had the baby?


■ Which things are important to you to continue and still make time for even when you're very busy?


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■ Which things do you think you may have to reduce or stop doing when the baby arrives?


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■ Thinking ahead, what do you think will be different in these areas of your life when the baby arrives?


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■ Social life and friends e.g. how often you go out, who you see, how you spend your time with friends.


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■ Health and fitness e.g. how your body feels and looks, how much exercise you get, how much sleep you get.


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■ **Close relationships e.g. how much support you get, how you communicate with each other.**



Share this section with some of the close people around you who will be helping you with the baby and see if they have similar ideas about what will change and what will stay the same.

What you can look forward to

Having a baby can be one of the most rewarding things you will do. Emotions often described following childbirth include joy, achievement, relief and pride for bringing a

baby into the world. You will have a new person to get to know and to grow with and there may be new emotions and challenges in this new phase of your life. One of the key messages in this workbook has been about taking care of yourself, and this is still really important after the birth. Keep doing small things each day which are good for your wellbeing and remember that there is no such thing as a 'perfect' mother!

■ **What specific things are you looking forward to after the birth? How will you know when these things are happening?**



SUMMARY

In this chapter you have had the chance to think ahead to the birth and afterwards and to consider how some of the things you've learned in this workbook will be able to help you through this transition.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

This is the last chapter, but there are still things to practise!

- ♦ Keep practising your relaxation and breathing techniques. These will be really useful during the birth.
- ♦ Use the skills you have from completing thought diaries to notice situations which make you feel low and challenge some of the thoughts that come up.
- ♦ As your pregnancy progresses, the activities you can do may change. Keep setting yourself goals and ensuring you get a mixture of enjoyable activities as well as things which give you a sense of achievement.



7.

Maintaining progress

What have I learned?

This is the last chapter in this workbook.

You've had the chance to learn about different ideas and techniques to support you during your pregnancy. It can take time to really learn these and get used to using them in your everyday life. Take some time to go back over previous chapters, read what you have written and think about the key things that you have learned and found useful.

It might also be useful to look back at pages 4-5 where you wrote down your thoughts about how you were feeling before you started the workbook. How has your understanding changed or developed since you answered those questions?

■ What have I learned?




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■ What was most useful?




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■ What would I like to find out more about?



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■ On page 10 you were asked to think about how things would be if you weren't feeling low. How close are you to achieving some of those goals?



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■ What can you continue doing to keep moving towards where you want to be? Write down some simple goals that will help you to look after your wellbeing over the coming weeks and months.



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How can I stay well?

Life always brings challenges and you may find yourself feeling low or anxious at difficult moments in the future. Having been through this workbook you probably know what some of the warning signs are that your mood is changing. For example, your thoughts might start to get

quite negative, you might start avoiding things, or you might notice yourself feeling tense. The good news is, you now have lots of strategies for overcoming these difficulties. Use the chart below to write down what your early warning signs are and what you can do about them.

Warning signs <i>e.g. thoughts, feelings, behaviours, body sensations</i>	Coping strategies
<i>Not feeling motivated to do anything, no energy.</i>	<i>Use the activity planner on page 24 to plan some activities that make me feel good</i>
<i>Trying to do lots of things and finding it hard to stay still or relax.</i>	<i>Re-read page 11 and listen to the relaxation MP3 and do the breathing exercises</i>

Well done for completing the workbook. Be sure to acknowledge all the hard work you've put in it. Remember, you can use these techniques any time that you need them, so feel free to refer back to the relevant chapters in future.

USEFUL RESOURCES

This is a list of useful websites and books that you might be interested in. Some of them have been mentioned throughout the workbook, but there are some new ones too.

Websites

Pregnancy and after the birth

www.nct.org.uk

The National Childbirth Trust (NCT) offers information and support in pregnancy, birth and early parenthood.

www.tommys.org

Tommy's is a charity which provides information to parents and funds pregnancy research.

www.netmums.com

Netmums is an online parenting organisation that offers advice on all aspects of pregnancy and parenting as well as putting you in touch with local groups in your community.

www.understandingchildhood.net

Understanding Childhood is an organisation which provides leaflets on child emotional development and behaviour.

www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Healthy start allows you to apply for vouchers to help buy basic foods during your pregnancy.

www.gingerbread.org.uk

Gingerbread is a charity which provides advice and practical support for single parents.

www.uk-sands.org

The stillbirth and neonatal death charity supports people affected by the death of a baby.

www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

The Birth Trauma Association supports women who have had a traumatic birth experience.

Apps

www.your-baby.org.uk

This website and app has information and videos about positive ways to bond with your baby, both before and after birth.

www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

This website includes the app 'Baby Buddy' which is designed to help new parents.

Cognitive behavioural therapy resources

These websites have information and self-help worksheets for a range of difficulties.

www.getselfhelp.co.uk

www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp

www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/consumers.cfm

Other

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Books

Towards Parenthood: Preparing for the changes and challenges of a new baby. 2009. ACER Press: Victoria, Australia.

www.towardsparenthood.org.au

Having a Healthy Pregnancy. 2012. Tommy's: London.

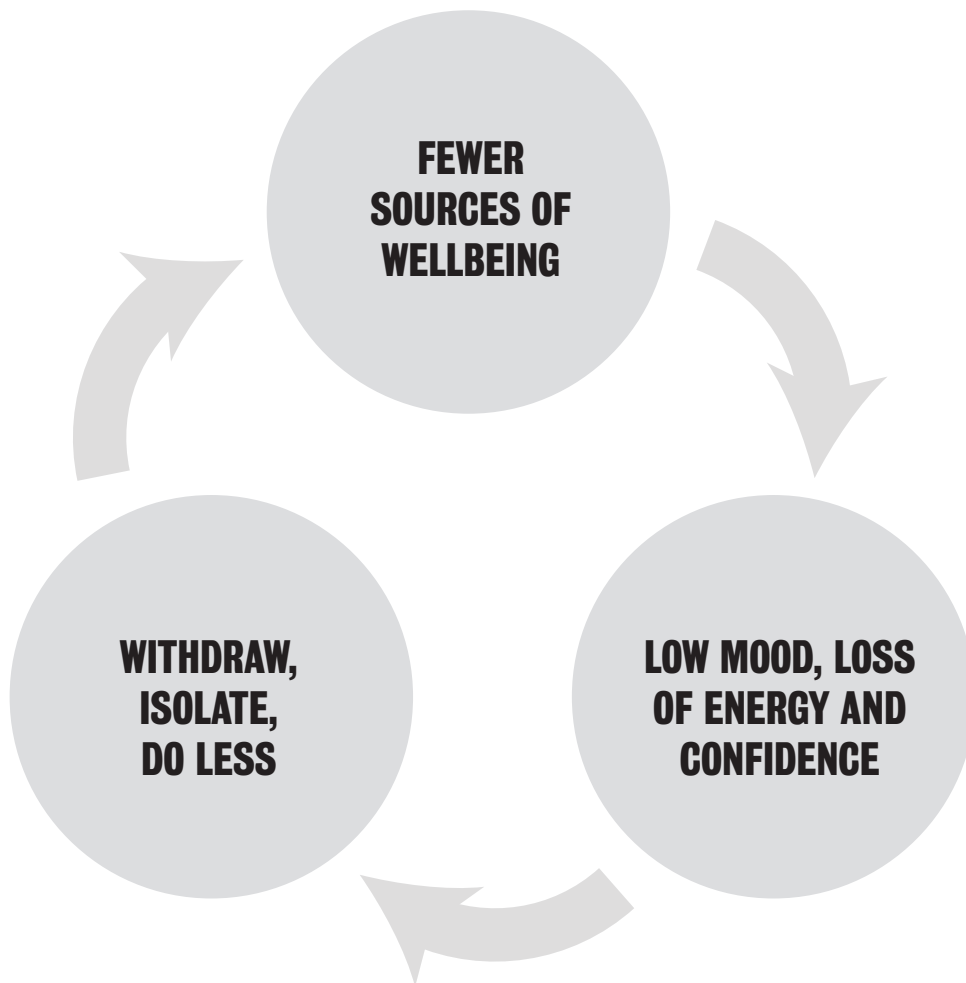
Antenatal and Postnatal Depression. Practical advice and support for all sufferers. 2000.

Curham, S. Vermilion: London.

Mind Over Mood: Change how you feel by changing the way you think. 1995. Greenberger, D & Padesky, C., The Guildford Press: London.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Dummies. 2010. Branch, R & Wilson, R., John Wiley & Sons, Ltd: Chichester.

APPENDIX: THE DEPRESSION TRAP



Used with permission from "Introduction to Behavioural Activation for Depression", Talking Therapies Southwark, 2012.



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