

DEALING WITH YOUR EMOTIONS DURING PREGNANCY

By

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When you become pregnant your thoughts range from being overjoyed and daydreaming about your new baby and what family life will be like to feeling worried about your ability to cope and you wonder how you will manage with all the demands of motherhood. You think that everyone else will be a better mother and you wonder if your feelings are “normal”.

Your body is changing and your hormones are in full force so is it any wonder that your moods seems to change? You may wonder how a new baby will affect your relationship with your partner as up until now you have only had to think about the two of you. You realise that life will never be the same again.

The one thing the majority of women face during pregnancy is tiredness and that is why getting enough to rest is so important. Most women find their moods are worst when they do too much and get over tired.

Hormonal changes play their role. These mood swings are perfectly

normal and are nothing to worry about. However, this does not mean they are not difficult and that some women feel a sense of being out of control.

It is important to remember that everyone is different. While many women breeze through pregnancy without any problems looking glowing and slim. Others seem to balloon instantly feeling pretty rough most of the time. Relatives may mean to be helpful with advice and stories of their own childbearing and sometimes the conflicting advice and the well-meaning comments may seem suffocating.

If you are pregnant and want to learn how to manage this special time the following tips may be of some help.

Handling physical discomfort

Nausea, fatigue, swelling and backache are common symptoms. There are now a number of things that you can do to help yourself. For example, A National Health Service Study showed 9 out of 10 pregnant women experienced a reduction or elimination of their symptoms by using an audio programme using a blend of music on an audiocassette. It works by

interrupting the passage of signals between the brain and gut that would normally cause sickness. Visit www.morningwell.co.uk for further information. Websites like NetDoctor www.netdoctor.co.uk have a range of leaflets and advice in handling everything from sore feet to aching backs. Even if the worst comes to the worst and you are one of the unlucky ones where nothing seems to work – you can always comfort yourself by remembering that your situation is only temporary and will pass.

Remember everyone and every time is different

Many women believe that just because they had a difficult first pregnancy the second will also be the same. Others had an easy time the first time round and are shocked that they feel so differently the second time. You are not your mother, sister or aunt and just because they experienced certain symptoms and feelings during their pregnancies does not automatically mean you will. I have seen women spend time worrying about what might happen instead of focusing on what is happening. You are unique and so is your pregnancy.

The need to reduce stress

You need to identify the personal and work-related sources of stress you are experiencing and develop effective ways to deal with them. A healthy diet, plenty of sleep and appropriate regular exercise all help. Eating five to six small meals a day ensures the best type of nutrition and keeps you and your baby well fed. Exercise keeps pregnant women fit while also helping prevent some common discomforts (such as backache and fatigue) while relieving stress. Meditation, yoga and massage all help to manage stress. There is ample evidence that these activities lower your heart rate and stress-hormone levels.

If you are not sure what type of exercise is safe then talk to your doctor or the nurse at your practice and they will be more than happy to advise you.

Learn to Relax

Dr. James McCubbin of Clemson University, South Carolina has developed a simple relaxation plan aimed at pregnant women.

1. Get comfortable. A quiet room with no phone works best. Lying down or reclining is good. Lie slightly tilted to one side with your stomach (and baby) partially supported by a pillow.
2. Prepare mentally. Clear your mind of distractions and focus on your relaxation.
3. Take control. You control the relaxation you give to your body and your baby.
4. Focus on your breathing. Use slow, steady, deep breaths from your stomach, not your chest.
5. Monitor your muscles. Learn to recognize tension in your body's major muscle groups.
6. Release the tension in each muscle group. Become familiar with the feel of tension dissolving.
7. Imagine yourself in your favourite restful place—maybe on the beach, by a stream or on a mountaintop.
8. Practice and enjoy the pleasant feelings that you have given to yourself and your baby. Do it at least once a day for 20 to 30 minutes.

Enjoying Sex during Pregnancy

Sex during pregnancy will not affect your baby. Therefore you and your partner can engage in your normal forms of sexual activity. However, it is also understandable that you may not always feel like sex.

Surprisingly, some women get particularly interested in sex when they are pregnant. During the last part of your pregnancy sex may prove a little difficult depending on the size of your baby. However, what is important is that you and your partner continue to be affectionate and engage in those forms of sexual activity that you are able to and enjoy. It is important to remember that you have a relationship and that relationships need TLC too if they are to remain strong.

Don't underestimate the power of looking good

So many women refuse to buy clothes while they are pregnant. A woman may be feeling down about the way her clothes do not fit. However, she will justify her situation by saying that it is a "*waste of money*" to buy new ones. Feeling good about yourself is a form of self-care. Caryn Franklin, presenter and fashion expert has produced an excellent free e-

book *How to Look Good if you are Pregnant* that can be downloaded from www.howtolookgood.com

Recognise your emotions

Recognise that your emotions can become heightened when pregnant and that it is perfectly normal to sometimes feel overwhelmed by it all. You may feel excited about what is to come, scared that that you might not be up to the task, full of disbelief that you could be a mum or frustrated because you can't do some of the things as easily when pregnant.

Whatever your feelings let your emotions flow over you – they will pass and they are all normal.

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