

The Fathers and Babies Toolkit



Mothers and Babies Curriculum

Developed By:

Ricardo F. Muñoz, PhD
Chandra Ghosh-Ippen, PhD
Huynh-Nhu Le, PhD
Alicia F. Lieberman, PhD
Manuela Diaz, PhD
Lauren La Plante, BA

Adapted By:

Darius Tandon, PhD
Hannah Snyder, BA
Erin Ward, MSW
Deborah Perry, PhD
Huynh-Nhu Le, PhD

Fathers and Babies Created By:

Darius Tandon, PhD
Jaime Hamil, MPH
Erin Ward, MSW

Acknowledgements

Craig Garfield, MD

© Copyright 2000, 2001 by Muñoz et al.
All Rights Reserved.

Do not cite or reproduce without
authors' permission.

Overview

What is the Fathers Toolkit?

A complementary Toolkit to the Mothers and Babies (MB) 1-on-1 Course—to engage fathers during the delivery of MB. The tool kit will introduce skills to support fathers' mental health. Second, it provides strategies to help fathers support their partners, as they become parents together.

How To Use The Toolkit The toolkit is designed to be delivered at the same a female partner is receiving the Mothers and Babies 1-on-1 Course. There two worksheets per module for specifically designed to engage fathers in the MB content being delivered.

When to use the Toolkit? There is likely to be diversity in who is the primary male figure in the life of a female who is receiving Mothers and Babies. Thus, Toolkit can be used with biological father OR the male partner who is most present in the life of the woman receiving Mothers and Babies. We recognize that some women receiving Mothers and Babies may have same-sex partners. We believe that the content of the Toolkit—for example, strategies to support a partner or engaging in pleasant activities with a partner—are relevant regardless of type of relationship, but would require some rewording on the part of a facilitator if working with a same-sex couple.

Paternal mental health and why it is important

We know about the importance of identifying and addressing maternal mental health problems like postpartum depression because of the effects on mother-infant bonding, parenting practices, and on infant cognitive and social emotional development. The same is true for fathers. Approximately 10% of fathers suffer from paternal postnatal depression (PPND) (Carlberg et al., 2018). Fathers with mental health problems may have more difficulty engaging with their babies, supporting moms, and transitioning into being the kind of father that they want to be (Gentile et al., 2017). Research has shown that dads who are depressed are less likely to be engaged with their children, less likely to play or read to their children, and more likely to spank or use corporeal punishment with their children. Independent of the effects of maternal depression, children of depressed fathers are more likely to have developmental, behavioral, and social problems, as well as increased risk for developing psychiatric disorders by school age (Gentile et al., 2017). Risk factors for paternal depression include low-income and low educational attainment, postpartum depression in their partner, and their own family history of depression (Carlberg et al., 2018). In addition, while having a baby and becoming a parent can be a wonderful thing, for most parents having a baby can also be stressful. Normalizing this experience and providing coping skills through MB and the Toolkit can provide lifelong opportunities to manage one's mood and teach these skills to their children.

Serving and engaging fathers through home visiting

Fathers' motivations to engage in home visits are primarily driven by their desire to become better fathers, especially among those who may have grown up without a father consistently in their lives. That said, mothers are typically the entry point or gatekeeper for fathers to become involved in home visiting. First time fathers may be especially interested in participating to learn as much as they can before baby arrives, such as how best to support their partner through labor and delivery and how to care for their infant.

Perceived benefits by fathers who participate in home visiting include (Sandstrom et al., 2015a):

- Increased knowledge about child development and parenting skills, learning about developmental milestones and how they can help their children learn to reach milestones as well as being able to identify when their child is not on track

- Better communication with their partner as they learn how to share parenting responsibilities, and support each other emotionally as they transition into new roles
- Improved stress (and anger) management in learning how to cope with consoling fussy babies and addressing misbehavior in constructive rather than punitive ways
- Early father-baby bonding as they form attachment and expectations
- Engaging with home visitors, and participating in the MB sessions with the Toolkit, can both provide tangible support and guidance toward meeting employment and academic goals by connecting them with community-based resources as well as development of healthy goal-setting behaviors and building on the successes they achieve through their personal practice of the MB skills and activities.

Overcoming obstacles to engagement

Some fathers may resist being “told how to raise a child.” Coming from a place of empowerment through knowledge can diffuse that power dynamic. Home visitors can connect with fathers as mentors or advocates by advocating for them and teaching them to advocate for themselves. This can serve to both strengthen the relationship and teach fathers how to access social and community supports. Create hands-on activities and games to exemplify concepts and break up didactic portions of MB content delivery to help engage them with their partner in learning and practice. Meet fathers where they are in their stage of readiness for change by encouraging them to set their own desired and achievable goals and supporting their efforts and successes.

Engaging young (teen) fathers

Teen fathers may pose a unique set of challenges that may not be so often encountered with older fathers. For example, lack of maturity may present challenges in being able to emotionally and cognitively deal with and process discussions about parenting. Living separately, lacking transportation, and having parents who are unsupportive, may pose practical barriers as well. Young (teen) parents are more likely to have relationship instability, which can make planning for co-parenting as a “forever family” difficult. Counsel the mothers (the primary home visiting client) on the importance of father/partner involvement (this issue will be most relevant for non-cohabiting parents). Early father/partner involvement with their baby, starting through joint home visiting participation, is predictive of remaining involved as their child grows up. Family resistance may occur when mom’s or dad’s own parents (baby’s grandparents) are not supportive of their relationship or their parent status. There may be challenges posed by grandparents who consider home visitors as undermining their authority and expertise, and young fathers (and mothers) may still be heavily dependent on their own family of origin. Spend time building rapport with grandparents to gain trust and cooperation (Sandstrom et al., 2015b)

Other supports for fathers

As your home visiting program further develops father engagement, think about other ways you can support new fathers, hosting or informing participants of peer support groups for fathers, offering family/group outings or events where they can interact with other dads and their families. Emphasizing that your home visiting program welcomes and supports fathers as well as mothers can only strengthen positive impacts on families.

What Does a Session Look Like? When you are delivering MB with your client and her partner use the this toolkit guide.

Note: During sessions when both partners are present, there may be additional time required in order to allow time for them to both participate in sharing and practicing.

In the Toolkit, there are new icons to help prompt and guide your client's partner to practice skills and support his partner, especially when he is receiving the session via text.



All topics and sessions include **PARTNER SUPPORT** to provide partner with ways to support his partner and practice the skills they are both learning in MB and FAB. Encourage your client and her partner to take time to talk to each other about their experiences, encourage each other along the way, and support one another they try new skills and prepare to become new parents.

References:

- Carlberg, M., Edhborg, M., & Lindberg, L. (2018). Paternal perinatal depression assessed by the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale and the Gotland Male Depression Scale: Prevalence and possible risk factors. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 1-10. DOI:10.1177/1557988317749071.
- Gentile, S., & Fusco, M.L. (2017). Untreated perinatal paternal depression: Effects on offspring. *Psychiatry Research*, 252, 325-332.
- Sandstrom, H., Gearing, M.E., Peters, H.E., Heller, C., Healy, O., & Pratt, E. (2015a). Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers' Experiences in Home Visiting Programs. OPRE Report no. 2015-103, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Sandstrom, H., Healy, O., Gearing, M.E., & Peters, H.E. (2015b). Serving Young Fathers in Home Visiting Programs: Highlights from a Research Study. OPRE report 2015-105. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Introductory Module



Key Points

- Highlight that life stressors affect how we feel emotionally and physically
- Discuss how specific stressors might affect:
 - The mother's and her partner's emotional health and physical well-being
 - The mother-baby, the father-baby and mother-father relationship
 - The Baby
- Identify common life stressors in participants' lives

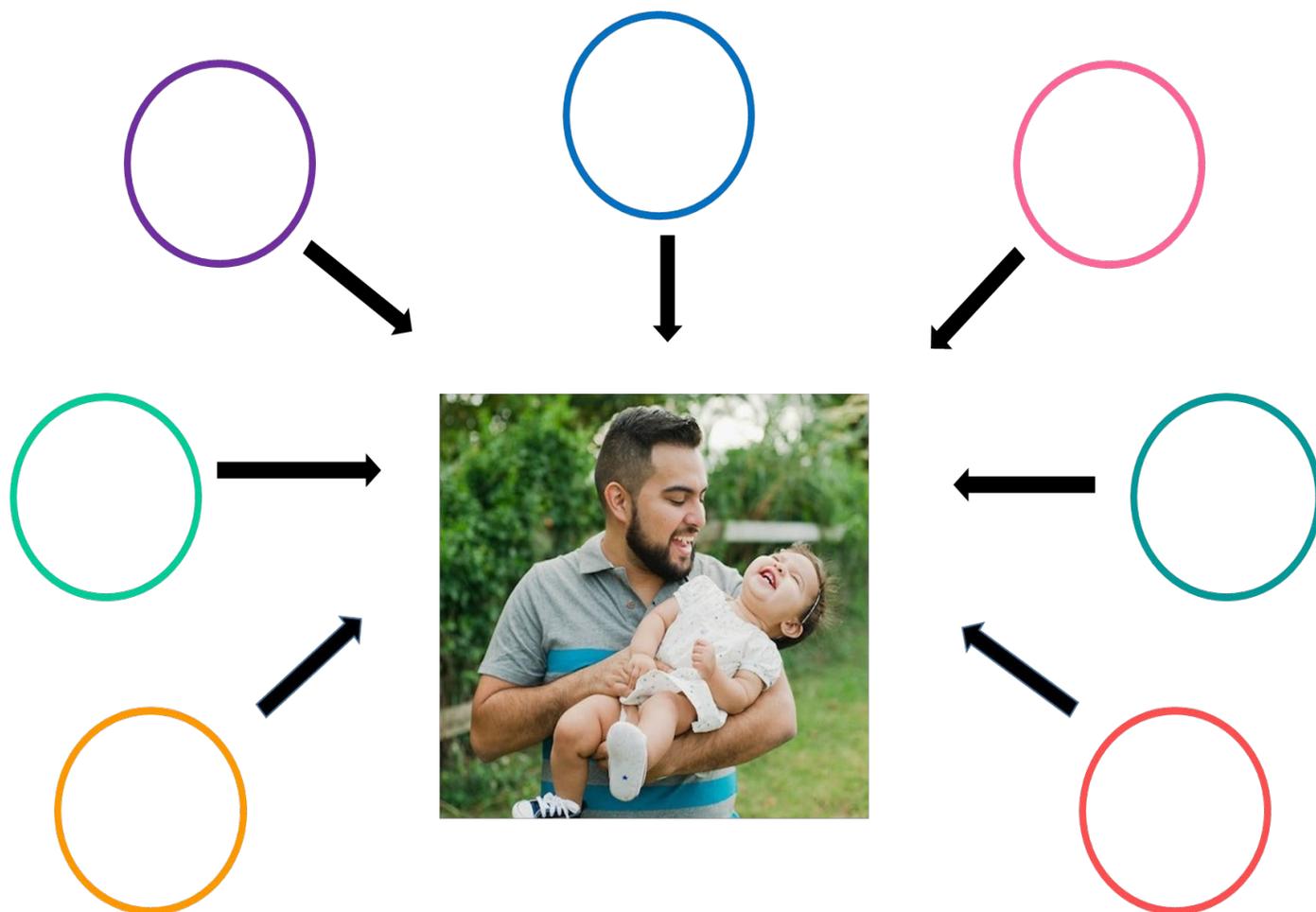
Reflect and Discuss:

- *What stressful things do you have in your life? Are there other stressful things that might affect the mother-baby and the father-baby relationship that aren't shown on **WORKSHEET 1.1**? Individually take some time to think of stressors.*
- *Now let's look at **WORKSHEET 1.1 in the Toolkit and fill out the bubbles with your stressors.***
- *Now, let's look at **WORKSHEET 1.2 (MB)** and think about how these different stressors might affect how we feel.*
- *How do you think feeling (tired, angry, sad) would affect the mother-baby and father-baby relationship? How would they affect your baby?*
- *What stressors affect you and your partner? Take some time to share.*

Session 1: WORKSHEET 1.1

STRESSORS THAT CAN AFFECT THE FATHER -BABY RELATIONSHIP

What are stressful things in your life? Are there other stressful things that might affect the father-baby relationship that aren't shown on WORKSHEET 1.1? Fill out the bubbles with your stressors.



Partner Support: *What stressors affect both you and your partner? Take time to share and talk with your partner about things that may be stressful for both of you.*

Pleasant Activities Module

Key Points



- When people do pleasant activities they often feel happier, are more likely to have positive thoughts about their lives, and are more likely to have positive contacts with other people.
- Doing pleasant activities helps to balance our lives, especially when we are feeling stressed.

- Help participants identify activities they enjoy doing both alone and with their baby.
- Highlight the following points:
 - Some pleasant activities are brief, cost nothing, and can be a part of everyday routines, if we can take time to notice and enjoy them.
 - We don't need to do a lot of pleasant activities to feel good.
- Mothers and Fathers can do activities with their babies that can affect both their mood and their babies' mood

Reflect and Discuss

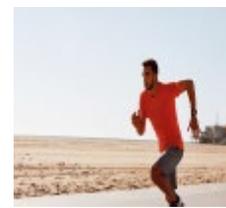
*Let's talk about the pleasant activities you listed on **WORKSHEETS 3.1**. There may be differences between activities you do by yourself and activities you do with others but both of them are important to have on your list.*

- How are your activities different or similar?

Session 3: Worksheet 3.1 WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO?

Pleasant activities are brief, cost nothing, and can be a part of everyday routines, if we can take time to notice and enjoy them. Think about different things that are pleasant activities for you. There may be differences between activities you do by yourself and activities you do with others but both of them are important to have on your list.

INSTRUCTIONS: Think about things you enjoy doing. Try to think of some things you can do alone or things you can do with others, including your baby’s mother. There is no right answer - only you know what you enjoy doing!



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____



Think about things you enjoy doing with your baby or things you can do with your baby when he/she is born.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

Remember, even a small pleasant activity can help improve your mood and reduce your stress level.

Fathers can do activities with their babies that can affect both their mood and their babies’ mood



Partner Support: Talk to your partner and come up with a list of pleasant activities that you and her like to do together and with your baby.

Thoughts Module

Key Points

- ❑ Helpful thoughts help improve mood.
- ❑ Harmful thoughts worsen mood.
- ❑ Both helpful and harmful thoughts affect us emotionally and physically and affect our inner reality.
- ❑ It is important to understand how the different thoughts we have can affect our mood
- ❑ Identifying harmful and helpful thoughts about your pregnancy and how they affect your mood is an important step toward improving your mood.

Reflect and Discuss

“Before we start to discuss some of the thoughts you both may be having, I first want to share some thoughts that many pregnant women and new mothers have:

- *“My body hurts, pregnancy sucks.”*
- *“I can’t believe there’s a life inside me.”*
- *“I don’t know if we can afford another child.”*
- *“I am looking forward to seeing my baby”*
- *“I am going to be a good parent.”*

Now I want to share some thoughts fathers may be having while his partner is pregnant or after becoming a new father. Let’s look at WORKSHEET 6.3 (FAB ONLY)”

- *“I can’t do anything right”*
- *“I will not be able to cope with the stress of having a baby”*
- *“I don’t know if we can afford another child.”*
- *“I am looking forward to seeing my baby”*
- *“I am going to be a good parent.”*
- *“I have great hope for the future for myself and my baby.”*

It is normal to have different types of thoughts during pregnancy and after giving birth—some joyful, some stressful—because of the changes you are experiencing, physically, emotionally, and in your daily life. You and your partner may have similar thoughts; you may also have very different thoughts. It is okay for you each to have your own thoughts. It is helpful to discuss your thoughts to let each other know how you are feeling or thinking. When you share with each other you can start to support each other’s positive thoughts.”

THOUGHTS ABOUT BEING A FATHER



Our thoughts affect the way we perceive life and how we are as fathers.

- You can decide what kind of father you want to be. For example, you can decide:
 - How to think about yourself, your baby, and your relationship with your partner
 - How you wish to treat your baby and what to teach him or her
- Remember that learning to think is like learning to talk. **Babies learn to think and talk by observing how their fathers and mothers think and talk.**
- As a father, you can be an example for your baby. You can help “shape” his/her thoughts so that they are healthy.



Journal Notes: *What are your thoughts about being a father?*



Partner Support: *Your partner is also having thoughts and ideas about being a mother. Take some time together to share your thoughts and listen to your partner’s thoughts. Take time together to discuss thoughts about being a family.*

Over the last few weeks, you both have been learning that you can shape your life by realizing, for example, that doing pleasant activities can help make you, your partner, and your baby feel better. In the same way, to have the life that you want, you can start doing things to make that future happen. You have 5 years to make this happen.

- What are some of the things you need to do now? What are some of the things that you need to avoid doing?
- The main thing to know is that if you each to feel good about yourself and your life, then as your baby grows up, he/she will feel good too, and be more secure in his/her life. Do you think that's true?
- There are things that you think and things that you do that make it more or less likely that you will act to achieve your goals. What are they?
- Is there anything else that would prevent you from having the life that you imagined? What are some potential roadblocks?
- Can you think of a way to overcome some of these roadblocks?

Exercise

Now, close your eyes, get in a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths.

[Ask each of the following questions and provide about a minute for your client to visualize their answers.]

- How old will your child be?
- What do you see him/her doing 1 year from now? 5 years from now?
- Is he/she in school? Is he/she able to read, write?
- Does he/she enjoy school?
- What kind of life do you want to have him/her to have?
- Who are the people in his/her life?
- What are some of the things that you want for your baby?
- What are some of the things that you do NOT want for your baby?

Reflect and Discuss

“From this activity, it's clear that as a mother and a father, you want the best for your child. So in the same way we talked about the ways in which you can help plan for your ideal future you can help plan for your baby's ideal future. Remember, you have 5 years to make this happen.

- To make this happen, what are some of the things you need to do now?
- What kinds of things do you need to teach your baby?
- What are some of the things that you need to avoid doing?”

Session 8: Worksheet 8.1

THINKING ABOUT YOUR BABY'S FUTURE

The same way babies learn to do pleasant activities from their parents, they learn thought patterns from their parents.

- **We learned our thought patterns by hearing the words that other people have said to us.** The way we think is shaped by many influences beginning in our childhood
- **Early experiences often shape the way we think** about ourselves, others, and the world. If we want to make changes in our children’s lives and thought patterns, we may need to make changes in our own ways of thinking first.
- Thoughts we learned during our childhood can be helpful or harmful. Harmful thoughts can cause burdens, pain, and sorrow later in life.
- While there is no way of guaranteeing that your child will think in one way or another, there are ways of increasing the possibility that your baby will think in a certain way.
- **Using the skills from Fathers and Babies,** you can work on adjusting how you think before your baby is born. By adjusting your thought patterns to be healthier, you will be able to share these helpful thought patterns with your baby.



MY BABY’S IDEAL FUTURE (1 year from now)	
What I want for my baby: <i>Example: I would like to my baby to enjoy reading.</i>	What I need to do now: <i>Example: I will start to ready to my baby now.</i>
What I don’t want for my baby:	What I need to avoid doing now:

Contact With Others Module



Key Points

- ❑ Participants can identify and evaluate their own social support system.
- ❑ There are different kinds of support.

“This exercise can help you understand where you have support and where you might need more support. As you do this exercise, it is important to note that some people provide only one type of support whereas others provide multiple types of support. For example, a person may be very understanding but won’t help with chores while another person may give you a ride when you need one but won’t spend an afternoon in the park with you. Not all people are good at all types of support.”

Reflect and Discuss

On **WORKSHEET 10.2 MB and WORKSHEET 10.1 Toolkit**, there are four squares, each representing a different type of support that a person might provide for you. As we go through them, think of the people in your life who might provide these different types of support, and write them down. If you can’t think of anyone who helps you in this way, put down a question mark

After completing the exercise on **WORKSHEET 10.2**, ask client and her partner to identify areas of social support that are adequate and areas of social support that they each would like to change and develop. Begin a discussion using the following questions:

- What do you notice?
- How many people did you think of for each type of support?
- Were they mainly friends/family/professionals?
- Where is there plenty of support?
- Where are the gaps? In which areas?
- Who gets a lot of mentions? (Identify risks of relying too much on one person since if that person is not available, you are left without any support).
- Who do they want to be part of their life as a mother and a father?
- Did you write your partner’s name in any of the boxes? Compare each other’s worksheets to reflect and discuss how they are similar or different

Session 10: Worksheet 10.1

PEOPLE WHO WILL PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ME AND MY PARTNER

INSTRUCTIONS: This time, each square describes a different type of support that people can give to you and your partner to help with your new baby. This is similar what you did a few days ago but this time we want you to think about people who are supporting you and your

partner as you are becoming parents. Think about the people in your life who fit in each square and write their names there. The same person can be written in more than one square.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT	ADVICE OR INFORMATION
Whom will you ask to:	Whom will you ask for advice/information:
COMPANIONSHIP	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
Who will:	Who will you look to:



Partner Support: Talk to your partner about who can support your family. Fill this worksheet out together or talk about each area.

Contact With Others Module

Key Points



- ❑ It's OK to ask for help.
- ❑ Asking for help in a positive, clear, and direct way (being assertive) can increase the chance that one's needs will be met (but not always).
- ❑ One way to ask for help is to do it systematically (step by step approach).
- ❑ By being assertive and expressing what you want and how you feel in a respectful way, you can improve relationships with others.
- ❑ Identifying obstacles to being assertive or expressing one's needs can help improve one's outer reality.
- ❑ There are different ways to overcome obstacles to expressing one's needs.

Reflect and Discuss

“Part of being assertive is being able to make requests in a clear and positive way. When we do this, we are better able to ask for what we want and need, others know how they can help us, and it increases the chance that we will get our needs met. Of course, it does not guarantee that we will get what we want. The other person may agree to a different compromise, or they may simply refuse, but at least we’ll know the answer. We all have times when we don’t say what’s on our minds and we often have a lot of excuses for not doing so. Sometimes the excuses are really good, and in some cases it might not be the right time to share our thoughts, feelings, or desires, but sometimes we fall into a non-speaking trap.”

“There are 5 steps that can help us to become more assertive and communicate in a way that might increase our chances of getting our needs met. These are located on WORKSHEET 11.2 (MB) and WORKSHEET 11.1 (Tool Kit).

1. Identify what you want.
2. Pick who you should ask for help.
3. Figure out a way to say it in a way that is clear and direct.
4. Respect the other person's right to say no (e.g. “I know you're really busy”). Talk about how this sets the stage for making a request.
5. Be willing to compromise

How can you and your partner get your needs met using assertive communication? Discuss with your partner, reflect on your past experiences, current situations. Brainstorm solutions to overcoming obstacles.”

GETTING YOUR NEEDS MET

There are 5 steps that can help us to become more assertive and communicate in a way that might increase our chances of getting our needs met.

<i>Steps</i>	<i>My Example</i>
1. <i>What do I need?</i>	
2. <i>Who can help me?</i>	
3. <i>Ask for what you need in a way that is clear and direct.</i>	
4. <i>Respect the other person's right not to do what you request.</i>	
5. <i>Be willing to compromise.</i>	



Partner Support: How can you and your partner get your needs met using assertive communication? Discuss with your partner, reflect on your past experiences, current situations. Brainstorm solutions to overcoming obstacles.

Contact With Others Module



- ❑ Having a baby sometimes creates conflicts or disagreements with others.
- ❑ Those disagreements can affect your mood.
- ❑ It is important to learn how to identify your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about those disagreements so that we can improve our mood.

“So we talked about how pregnancy or having a new baby can change your relationships with others and that it can put stress on relationships with friends, family, partners, or other children.

For example, maybe your mother doesn’t agree with how you’re parenting your baby, and you keep arguing about it. Or maybe you don’t think your partner is helping out enough, and you’re angry about it.”

Reflect and Discuss

There may be a tendency to “vent” about people the client is angry with or adopt a blaming attitude. It’s helpful for the client and her partner to understand their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors but also encourage them to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of the other person in the disagreement.

As participants share, ask:

- *Is there a solution where you can both get what you want?*
- *Could you do anything to make this situation healthier or more positive for you?*

Use this technique with your partner to work through your disagreements. Work together to find a solution that is healthy for both of you, including your baby. Remember to use assertive communication and you may have to compromise.

Session 11: Worksheet 11.2

ROLE DISAGREEMENTS OR DISPUTES

- Having a baby sometimes creates conflicts or disagreements with your partner.
- It is important to learn how to identify your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about those disagreements so that we can improve our mood.
- It's helpful to understand your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors but also to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of your partner in the disagreement. Use the four areas below work through your disagreements. Work together to find a solution that is healthy for both of you, including your baby.



Feelings: What are your feelings about this person?

Thoughts: Think about conflict(s) you had with your partner over the past week.

- How does the conflict affect the way you view yourself?
- How does the conflict affect how you view the other person?
- How does the conflict affect the way you view the world?

People: Think about the person you are having problems with

- How do you think she sees the problem? (Try to understand her point of view even though you may not agree with it)
- Is there a solution where you both get something important that you want?
- Is there anyone who could help you with solving the problem?

Behaviors: When you have a problem with this person, how do you behave?

- Is this how you usually behave when you have problems with her?
- When you have problems with your partner, how does she behave?
- Could you do anything to help shape the situation into one that is healthier for you?

Is there a solution where you can both get what you want?

Could you do anything to make this situation healthier or more positive for you?



Partner Support: Talk to your partner about her role changes. What are the similarities and differences compared to your role changes. How can you support each other during these changes?