PERINATAL SELF-ESTEEM, IDENTITY & SENSE OF SELF
A New Approach to Healing

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PERINATAL SELF-ESTEEM, IDENTITY & SENSE OF SELF

“Who Am I? Who Am I Now...?”

Pregnancy, Postpartum, Motherhood
“Sense of Self”

- What does this really mean?
- Identity
- Self-Esteem
- Self-Worth
  - Who we think, feel, believe we are and who we truly are.
- Can be misunderstood
- Based on past experiences
- Based on current circumstances
- Based on other’s opinions/input
- Changes as we grow
Self-Esteem & PMADs: Research Predictors Of PPD

• Self-Esteem is a top PPD Predictor:
• Top Predictors of PPD: #1 Prenatal depression, #2 Self-esteem (SE) (Beck, 2001)
• Risk Factors: Low SE a strong predictor of prenatal depression (Leigh & Milgrom, 2008) & a moderate predictor of PPD, along with maternal neuroticism (Stewart et al., 2003)
• PPD associated with higher parenting stress (Leigh & Milgrom, 2008) & parenting stress linked with lower maternal self-esteem (MSE).
• It is truly a vicious cycle!

Predictors of PPD are same across diverse populations. (Luquet & Chmiel, 2002)
Self-Esteem & PMADs: Research The SE-PPD Link

- Unrealistic expectations, prenatally, associated with lower SE & higher depression, anxiety and stress, postpartum (Lazarus & Rossouw, 2015)
- Self-esteem instability, and not level of SE, correlated with higher levels of depression
- Greater prenatal SE reactivity associated with higher levels of PPD
- Changes in day-to-day experience of SE related with changes in depressed mood (Franck et al., 2016)
- Self-esteem, not optimism, contributes to lower rates of PPD (Fontaine & Jones, 1997)

Maternal Self-Esteem (MSE) & Impact on Children

- MSE mediates effects of mom’s daily stressors and quality of intimate relationships, which mediates depressive symptoms (Hall et al., 1996).
- Strong MSE influences interactions with and attachment to infant (McGrath et al., 1993; Yarcheski et al., 2009).
- Maternal stress and parenting style related to child’s level of SE (McGrath et al., 1993).
- Maternal warmth associated with greater SE and lower stress in children (see also 2016).
- PPD greater impact of infant birth complications on maternal self-esteem (MSE) and MSE negatively influences quality of mother-infant relationship (Ahlfs-Dunne et al.).
- Infant health is a predictor of MSE (McGrath et al., 1993). Maternal depression & infant colic related to low MSE (Maxted et al., 2005).

Which comes first? Low self-esteem or depression?

- Vulnerability model: LSE leads to depression
- Scar Model: depression erodes SE
- Depression: Vulnerability model (meta-analysis of 77 longitudinal studies on depression & 18 on anxiety)
- Anxiety: Both. SE impacts anxiety and anxiety impacts SE.
- “Interventions aimed at increasing self-esteem might be useful in reducing the risk of depression” (Sowislo & Orth, 2013)
Why focus on self-esteem in PMAD treatment?

- Why do we need a new approach?
- If SE is so linked to PMADs, and in many cases may be the ultimate instigating factor underlying the illness, why NOT treat SE as a first-line approach?
- As we treat self-esteem/self-worth, we teach important skills—self-awareness, self-care, self-acceptance, self-love, self-confidence
- Moms need all of these!

SELF-ESTEEM VS. SELF-WORTH
Theory & Definition

Self-Esteem: “Who Am I?”

- Based on... thoughts, feelings, behaviors, other’s opinions/feedback, experiences....
- “Basing worth on external sources—like appearance, academic or physical performance, or approval from others—leads to greater anger, stress, relationship and academic problems, and higher alcohol and drug use and eating disorders” (Coster, 2002).”

(8 Keys to MH Through Exercise, p. 42)
Self-Esteem vs...

• Who You are NOT:
  • You are not how you look.
  • You are not how you feel.
  • You are not what you think.
  • You are not your roles.
  • You are not what you do. (Who Am I Without You, p. 89-90)

• Then, who are you, really?

Self-Worth

Who you REALLY are.
(8 Keys to MH Through Exercise, p. 36; Who Am I Without You?)

SELF-WORTH:
The ability to comprehend & accept my true values.
To understand I am more than my mind, body, emotions & behaviors.
To see myself as God sees me.
To accept His love (for, me)
To learn to love myself in like manner.

-CHRISTINA G. HIBBERT, PSYD
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The Pyramid Of Self-Worth

www.DrChristinaHibbert.com
Self-Awareness

“Self-awareness means taking a bold, searching look at all the good, the bad, the ugly and the exceptional—what makes you unique, your talents, your highs and lows—to be willing to see it all, knowing everyone has strengths and weaknesses. It’s hard to love or accept yourself if you don’t know yourself. As we open up and examine who we really are—how we behave, what we think and believe, how we feel, what we’re good at, and what we struggle with—then we can learn to accept it. And acceptance is critical to feeling self-worth.”

Hibbert

Self-Awareness...

Fearlessly meet your needs.

- Dr. Christina Hibbert

It’s called a need because you need it.

- Dr. Christina Hibbert

www.DrChristinaHibbert.com
Self-Acceptance

Self-Acceptance is the process of being where we are long enough to appreciate where we have been and where we are headed.
- Dr. Christina Hibbert

www.drchristinahibbert.com

Self-Acceptance...

You're better than you think you are. You're worthy, you're remarkable; you're doing the most important work.
- Dr. Christina Hibbert

MOM.

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Self-Love

Self-Love is...
- Self-Care
- Self-Compassion
- Self-Kindness
- Letting Others Love You

4 Ways to Practice Self-Love
1) Self-Compassion
Feel your feelings, don't judge them.

2) Self-Kindness
Treat yourself as you would a good friend.

3) Let Love In.
Don't block love from flowing freely.

4) Receive God's Love
Feel it, embrace your divine potential.

www.drchristinahibbert.com
Self-Worth & Perfectionism

Believe in You

- Changing unhealthy/unhelpful thoughts/beliefs
  - CBT
  - Thought Record
  - Positive Affirmations vs. Truthful Affirmations

- Believe in yourself Practice:
  - List all "truths"
  - Pick 5-10 that feel most helpful
  - Select 2-3 statements that encourage you to believe in you.
  - Pull out "true affirmations" and remind yourself when hard times come.
  - Post on your phone, mirror, fridge, record yourself saying them and listen. Set a reminder to look at and meditate on your truthful affirmations several times each day. www.choosetogrow.com

Exercise, Self-Esteem, and PMAD Treatment

EXERCISE TO IMPROVE SELF-ESTEEM

www.self-esteemandfitness.com
Benefits of Exercise Are ENDLESS!

"Were exercise available in a pill, everyone would take it.

It’s that good."

Dr. Charlotte Hibbert
www.3rhibbertfitness.com

8 Keys to Mental Health Through Exercise

• Key 1: Heal your Mind & Body w/ Exercise
• Key 2: Improve your Self-Esteem w/ Exercise
• Key 3: Exercise as a Family
• Key 4: Get Motivated
• Key 5: Change how you Think about Exercise
• Key 6: Overcome Roadblocks
• Key 7: Get FITT-Physically & Mentally
• Key 8: Implement your Vision & Flourish!
Positive Psychology & PERMA

**PERMA**
- Positive Emotions
- Engagement
- positive Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment (Seligman, 2012)

Flourishing!
- Focus on what’s right and build from there

4 Questions to measure Flourishing
1. How much positive emotion?
2. How much meaning and purpose?
3. How good are my relationships?
4. How much mastery, confidence, competence and achievement do I enjoy in life?

Positive Psychology & Flourishing

“I don't want to just be better. I want to be better than better. I don't want to only overcome. I want to become. I want to flourish!”

This is How We Grow, p. 401

“We don't have to settle for just being better. We can seek to become ‘better than better.’ The field of positive psychology calls this flourishing... to ‘grow luxuriantly,’ to ‘thrive,’ to ‘prosper.’”

Who Am I Without You?, p. 143
Flourishing! It truly is possible!

Never give up on discovering and being who you really are. Never.
Dr. Christina Hibbert
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Embrace the true you!
“See the light that’s uniquely yours. It’s time to own it. Then, it’s time to let your light shine.”
Who Am I Without You, p. 112
PSI Annual Conference 2016
San Diego

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Resources

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