

**Helping Couples Navigate Their Postpartum Journey: A Skills-Based Approach**

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**About Crystal and Lisa**

Crystal is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice at Iris Reproductive Mental Health in Burnsville, MN. She became involved in Perinatal Mental Health as her journey to building a family came with both infertility and postpartum depression. Realizing how little help there was available, she decided to build a practice in these areas, and helped form Pregnancy and Postpartum Support Minnesota in 2006, and has been Co-Director since 2014. She is also a State Co-Coordinator for the MN Chapter of PSI.

Lisa Cross is a licensed marriage and family therapist in Plymouth, MN. She is the Co-Director of Pregnancy & Postpartum Support MN and a State Co-Coordinator for PSI. Lisa's specialization in Perinatal Mental Health came after she suffered from PPOCD after the birth of her first child. She uses her personal experience combined with her advanced training to help provide a more personalized experience of healing with her clients.

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**"Postpartum Depression is a family illness"**  
~ Karen Kleiman

**"Realize that we are all in the same soup"**  
~John Gottman

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### How do I get them in?

- Partner may be reluctant
- Partner may not "get" his/her mental illness
- They may not feel important - this is not true!



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### Why does he/she have to be there?

- Partners get PPD too- 1 in 10. (but likely higher)
  - Wives often don't disclose full details (suicidal ideation, intrusive thoughts)
  - Partner's support is critical to healing!!
  - Address other contributing factors- trauma, previous issues
  - Getting the full picture of their relationship
- Helping the *couple* to understand the identity changes that occur in a marriage and in individuals following the birth of a child
- \*He/She may be first person to notice emergency issues, and has to know how to best handle them.\***

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### Men & Depression

Some of the more common symptoms for Paternal Postnatal Depression include:

- Irritability
  - Isolating/Withdrawing from relationships
  - Working a lot more or less
  - Low Energy
  - Fatigue
  - Low motivation
  - Poor concentration
  - Changes in weight or appetite
  - Impulsivity
  - Risk-taking behaviors, often including turning to substances (alcohol, prescription drugs, etc)
  - Physical symptoms (headaches, muscle aches, stomach/digestion issues)
  - Anger and outbursts
  - Violent Behavior
  - Suicidal Thoughts
- \*From www.drchristinahibbert.com



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### Impact of PMADs on couples

The transition to parenthood has been identified as the potential cause of a general increase in marital conflict and a large decrease (60%) in marital satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is particularly important to consider among postpartum parents because it influences positive mother and father co-parenting behaviors towards young infants

Overall, mothers and fathers appeared to be poor reporters of their partners subjective sleep, relationship satisfaction, and mood disturbance. (Insana et. al.)

Which impacts....



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### Attachment

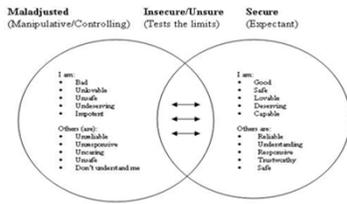


Figure 1 Attachment Security and Representations regarding Self and Other

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### Gender Differences

Men want to fix, women want to be validated (It's not about the nail)

Men like to "do" and see things being done; women want emotional connection

Women expect men to instinctively know what they want

Differences in libido, especially postpartum + mental health + antidepressants...

Depression looks different in men than in women

Women tend to take on more of the parenting early on (could be self-imposed)

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### Validation 101

"You will get better, and you are doing everything that you can to get better."

"You are a good mom, even if you feel terrible".

"I can see how hard you are working to get better/be a good mom".

"I love you, and I am here with you".

\*Do not tell her to "not worry" or "get over it".

\*Do not tell her to "just stop thinking about it"



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### Gottman & Doherty- my favorites!!

#### Gottman's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse:

- criticisms: verbally attacking your partner's personality or character.
- contempt: attacking your partner's sense of self with the intention to insult or psychologically abuse them.
- defensiveness: viewing yourself as the victim in efforts to ward off a received attack and reverse blame.
- stonewalling: withdrawing from a relationship as a way to avoid conflict in efforts to convey disapproval, distance and separation.

#### Doherty-

Marital Happiness Scale

"Consumer Culture"

"Hard Reasons" vs. "Soft Reasons"

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**Five Love Languages**

\*Quiz on website:  
<http://www.5lovelanguages.com/>



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**Same Sex Couples & Multi- Cultural Couples**

PPD exists in non-birth parents

Previous research has described greater psychological morbidity in lesbian women compared with heterosexual women, mainly as a consequence of minority stress. (Borneskog, et. Al. 2013)

“Perceived social support, relationship satisfaction, disclosure of sexual orientation and the unique role of the co-mother are other factors that have been reported to impact on anxiety and depressive disorders in lesbian women.”

See handout provided, research very limited.

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**The strength of the family is largely influenced by the strength of the -  
parental relationship**  
- McLanahan & Beck 2010

**Feelings of fear, frustration & resentment build when  
couples are not able to effectively understand & support one  
another**  
- Duffey & Wooten 2004

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### The Enneagram in Couples Work

- A mapping of 9 fundamental personality types
  - helps to understand different personality types
  - helps to develop insight into core psychological issues
  - helps individuals in personal transformation
- Gives a rationalization for the way we live and behave
- Goal of the Enneagram is to stop the automatic reactions of the personality by bringing awareness to it.

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### Personal Transformation using Enneagram

Transformation requires 3 basic elements:

- 1) Presence (awareness, mindfulness)
- 2) Self observation
- 3) Understanding of what one's experiences mean

Being supplies #1

You supply #2

Enneagram supplies #3

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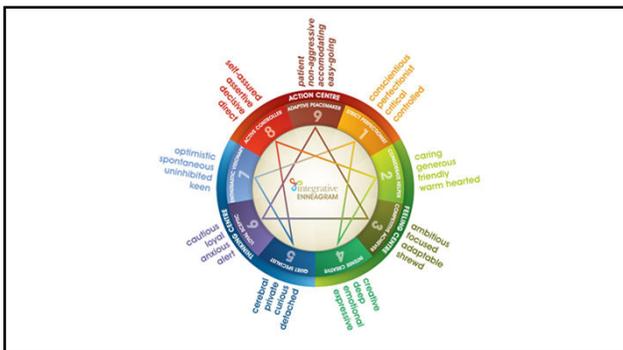
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### The Enneagram:

The Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI) is a scientifically validated forced-choice personality test with 144 paired statements

I've been:

- romantic and imaginative.
- pragmatic and down to earth.

I have tended to:

- take on confrontations.
- avoid confrontations.

<https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/discover/>

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### How the Enneagram can help:

#### Type 6: 6. The Loyal Skeptic

A Loyal Skeptic is concerned with finding certainty or security. Their sense of being safe is challenged by a world that appears to be dangerous. This may take them in one of two directions — towards fear or against it.

They may either fear the world, or to deny there is anything to fear. They may then believe you must avoid and escape perceived danger. Or they may believe you must face and fight it.

A Loyal Skeptic will tend to be vigilant. They also tend to have many doubts, and can be highly ambivalent. They can easily misread or mistrust others. There can be difficulties with authority figures — either in the form of excess loyalty and obedience, or rebellion and opposition.

Danger can be seen everywhere. This can result in anxiety and fear — and increased vigilance. The Loyal Skeptic may focus excessively on negative future outcomes, the downside and what could go wrong. Trying to protect themselves from imagined disasters, they will end up acting in ways that create self-fulfilling prophecies.

Others may feel a sense of being scrutinized, pursued or accused — often erroneously. People can be pushed away by the excessive vigilance and attempt to control them. Others resent that the Loyal Skeptic is projecting negative things onto them, and they yearn for a more relaxed state.

Personal growth for a Loyal Skeptic is to learn to embrace uncertainty. Begin to focus on the positive aspects of life, the positive qualities in other people. The ability to trust will be helped by internally asking the question "What if what I think I see here is not real?" — and then doing calm, respectful reality-testing with others.

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### Review of Type 6 as a sample:

What does this type sound like?

The road to personal growth gives us the tools to help this person

If a spouse had knowledge that his PPOCD wife has a fundamental believe that the world is unsafe, he would know that she needs

- help to embrace uncertainty
- help with refocusing on the positive aspects of parenting
- help her learn to trust by helping her to challenge her thoughts and connect with her core beliefs

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### Using Enneagram During Pregnancy:

- Helps couple anticipate possible PMAD tendencies
- Helps couple to learn about each other's communication styles and core beliefs
- Helping the couple to understand how one another functions in times of distress
- Helping couples to know how to sooth and calm one another
- Helping couples to identifies when their spouse is in an average state.

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### Research

- "The Postpartum Husband" Karen Kleiman, M.S.W.
- Postpartum Couples DVD by Christina Hibbert, Psy.D.  
<http://www.drchristinahibbert.com/postpartum-couples-dvd/>
- "And Baby Makes Three" by John Gottman
- "Tokens of Affection" by Karen Kleiman
- "Babyproofing Your Marriage" by Cockrell, O'Neill and Stone
- "Hold Me Tight" by Susan Johnson
- "Personality Types" by Don Riso and Russ Hudson

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