



## Mothers Mental Wellness for Child Development

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### ABSTRACT

After the birth of the child, the responsibility of its upbringing rests on the parents. With the passage of time, as the baby progresses towards development, it becomes necessary to pay more attention to it. Every month the baby grows rapidly. Many important changes begin to occur in babies, which are necessary for their overall development. The word mother is a very small word, but no one can measure its depth. Mother cannot be expressed in a few words. Every person has his own definition for mother. Being a mother is one of the most important roles a woman can ever play. Mothers play a huge role in their children's lives, caring for them, loving them, teaching them, and so much more. The way a child develops can be largely attributed to the role that their parents and caregivers play in their lives, so what exactly is the role of a mother in a child's early childhood development.

**KEYWORDS:** Maternal Illness, Child Health, Nutrition.

Motherhood is recognized as a dynamic, life-altering and ongoing process of transition in a woman's identity, and a permanent shift in a woman's life. Pregnancy, birth and the [postpartum period](#) are recognized as neurohormonal processes ([Hoekzema et al., 2017](#)). A substantial number of women, going through the process of becoming and being a mother, pursue finding an equilibrium in new or renewed motherhood. Children thrive when they have a secure and positive relationship with people, especially their parents. Studies have shown that early childhood is a period in which developmentally, a child is learning a lot from their surrounding and the people around them. This is the child's window of learning which will impact their growing years. Therefore, as the main presence in a child's life at this point, a mother's relationship with her child is crucial. A mother plays multiple roles in a child's development, as she is a teacher in every aspect of a child's developmental growth – social emotional, physical, cognitive and independence. A child's healthy development depends on their parents, especially mothers who serve as their first source of support in becoming independent and leading healthy and successful lives. While mothers have turned to various coping tools to maintain their mental health, like taking me-time, engaging in hobbies, exercising, meditation, therapy/couples therapy, etc. It is important for mothers to remember that they should not be too hard on themselves and sometimes should let things go if they are out of their control while making self-care and mental health their priority.

In a society where motherhood and sacrifice are often seen as synonyms, more often than not, moms are not taking care of themselves and according to a survey, moms put their health and wellbeing at the end of the list because they juggle many roles such as caregiver, partner, homemaker, employee, daughter-in-law and multiple others. Each of these roles is governed by attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives and most of them have a set of many unrealistic expectations and demands, which often prove to be highly taxing on one's physical and mental health.

As gratifying as motherhood can be, it is inevitably taxing. Describing its demands, Balaji and colleagues pithily note that, "parenting involves a number of mental health costs, including time, physical and emotional energy, conflicts with other social roles, and the economic burden of childrearing. These hardships are especially salient for women, who are often the primary caretakers of children" ([Balaji, Claussen, Smith, Visser, Morales, & Perou, 2007](#), p. 1388).

Increasingly, it has been suggested that the burdens associated with parenting can be pronounced in a group rarely considered in developmental science, that is, upper-middle class mothers. Cohort data indicate marked increases in demands on energy and time in this group: Between 1993 and 2008, college-educated mothers increased their time invested in childrearing from 12.0 to 20.5 hours per week, whereas less educated mothers increased theirs from 10.5 to 16.0 hours ([Ramey & Ramey, 2010](#)). Parallel increases for college-educated fathers were from 4.2 to 9.7 hours per week. Similarly, data between 2003 and 2007 showed that as compared to their less educated counterparts, college-educated American mothers of six to thirteen year olds invested 130 percent more time in parenting responsibilities of "management", that is, planning, organizing, and monitoring their children's lives outside the home ([Kalil, Ryan, & Corey, 2012](#)).

### A WORKING MOM'S MENTAL HEALTH IS NOT OKAY

The mental health findings of this report are concerning but not surprising. The report reveals that working mothers are experiencing higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to working fathers, with 66% of working mothers reporting negative mental health impacts as a result of the pandemic.

Nearly half (46%) of mothers are currently seeking therapy.

Fifty-eight percent of moms report they are primarily responsible for the duties of running a household and caring for children.

Eight-in-ten (80%) mothers are concerned about a possible recession and 71% report they are planning to cut back spending.

The synaptic networks in a child's brain are still being formed during the first five years of their lives. Children at this stage are particularly receptive to human contact. How parents interact with their children and engage them in cognitive, social and emotional developmental activities during these years will define their future selves. A mother can be in contact with her child's teacher to stay updated what the child learns in the classroom and help to reinforce and transfer this learning in the home setting.

### PARENTS BE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

1. Be a good role model.
2. Love your child and show them love through actions, such as hugs, spending time with them and listening to them.
3. Be a safe haven. Children raised by parents who respond consistently will have a better social and emotional development.
4. Talk with your child, as this helps their brain integrate. When different parts of the brain are integrated, they function harmoniously and leads to more co-operative behaviour and more empathy.
5. Pay attention to your own well-being. Take good care of yourself physically, emotionally and mentally. Take time to strengthen your relationship with your spouse. If these areas fail, your child will suffer too.

A mother has the biggest influence on her child, and their relationship develops from when the baby is in the womb. In this post, we discuss a mother's influence on child development. **Becoming a mother is a life-long responsibility and is filled with moments of happiness, pride, and emotions.** It can very well be called a roller coaster ride.

Motherhood is a special feeling, but along with the joy of bringing light to a new life comes a barrage of emotions. The mixed bag of feelings can be overpowering at times, thereby making the life of a mother go haywire at times. More often than once, mothers, the primary caretakers of the child, do not prioritize their mental and physical well-being. It happens so because of the absence of their precious self-care time that included activities that they liked to indulge in before motherhood. And so, the mental health of mothers matters.

There could be a lot of reasons behind [mothers not prioritizing their mental health](#). The first one being a simple lack of awareness. Mental health issues of mothers often do not have a face. A mother can be depressed, anxious and yet be clueless of all the signs that depict that she is undergoing a breakdown. It could partly be due to lack of knowledge and discussion in the family as well educational orientations in schools and colleges. The stigma attached to mental health of mothers along with family pressure becomes a barrier to discussion of her problems. Pertaining to the caregiver, nurturer image that mothers ought to live up to, they think of themselves as a role model for their child. In such cases, the vulnerable mothers, who need empathy and a lending ear for themselves, often suffer from mom guilt for not living up to the expectations.

### POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION IS A MAJOR ISSUE

[Postpartum depression](#) in a mother can alter a child's experience of the world, both internally and externally. There is a marked difference in the way a mother interacts with her children when depressed and this can hugely impact a child's development.

In some societies, where discussing mental health is a taboo, it becomes hard for mothers to accept or express the need to seek help in raising kids. According to experts, alerting the mothers to not suppress feelings that might be detrimental to their mental health and giving an outlet for their emotions, is extremely important.

### THE NEED OF SELF-CARE TIME FOR MOTHERS

Taking time for your own interests should not result in guilt, which is often the case with mothers. When you make time for yourself and fulfill your needs, then only you can look after everyone else; your children, your partner, and your work. Mothers need to realize that they can't care for others if they don't give love and care to themselves first. In general, motherhood is regarded as meaningful, humbling, precious, fulfilling, rewarding, blissful, gratifying, wonderful and joyful. Motherhood is characterized by connectedness, affection, warmth, closeness and interdependency in the mother-child dyad over the course of motherhood ([Taylor et al., 2005](#))

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## POOR MENTAL HEALTH IN PARENTS IS RELATED TO POOR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH IN CHILDREN

A recent study asked parents (or caregivers who had the role of parent) to report on their child's mental and physical health as well as their own mental health. One in 14 children aged 0–17 years had a parent who reported poor mental health, and those children were more likely to have poor general health, to have a mental, emotional, or developmental disability, to have adverse childhood experiences such as exposure to violence or family disruptions including divorce, and to be living in poverty.

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## CONCLUSION

Being mentally healthy during childhood includes reaching developmental and emotional milestones and learning healthy social skills and how to cope when there are problems. Mentally healthy children are more likely to have a positive quality of life and are more likely to function well at home, in school, and in their communities. A child's healthy development depends on their parents—and other caregivers who act in the role of parents—who serve as their first sources of support in becoming independent and leading healthy and successful lives.

The mental health of parents and children is connected in multiple ways. Parents who have their own mental health challenges, such as coping with symptoms of depression or anxiety (fear or worry), may have more difficulty providing care for their child compared to parents who describe their mental health as good. Caring for children can create challenges for parents, particularly if they lack resources and support, which can have a negative effect on a parent's mental health. Parents and children may also experience shared risks, such as inherited vulnerabilities, living in unsafe environments, and facing discrimination or deprivation.

In families, where both the mother and father are equally involved in child rearing, the woman is able to experience less guilt and more satisfaction while being a working mother. Mutual understanding between spouses ensures that along with bringing in the income, both parents not only share the responsibilities of childcare and the immense fulfillment that comes with it, but also continue to enjoy each other's company as partners.

In conclusion, maternal mental health deserves full attention of stakeholders involved, from health officials, lawmakers, and health care providers to employers and families. Its challenges are treatable but require awareness and collaborative coordination that promotes education and support for mothers. By figuring out the emotional and psychological needs of the mother into the scope of early family pediatric visits, this support has a greater chance of coming on time and in the manner that best serves the entire family and in solidifying the foundational fabric of society.

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