

WELCOME to the

Caring for Mother/Baby Dyad during the COVID  
Era ECHO

Session will start in less than 15 minutes



# Perinatal Mental Health in the COVID-19 Era

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# Disclosure

- No conflicts of interest to disclose



# Objectives

- Overview of perinatal mental health
- COVID-specific considerations
- Resources for treatment
- Resources for a crisis
- Resources for support
- Resources for coping



# Perinatal Mental Health

- 1 in 7 women experience a clinically significant perinatal mood or anxiety disorder (PMAD)
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
  - PTSD
  - OCD
  - Psychosis
- Many of these women have pre-pregnancy psychiatric illness
- Pregnancy or the postpartum period can be triggers for worsening symptoms



# COVID considerations

- Anxiety
  - What if I get sick during my pregnancy?
  - Will my partner be allowed to be present for delivery?
  - Will I be separated from my baby?
  - Will my mom be able to come to help postpartum?
  - Is it safe for me to go to the doctor?
  - Is it safe for me to give birth in a hospital?
  - What if I (or my partner) is an essential worker?
  - What about my other children?
  - How long will this last?



# COVID considerations

- Isolation
  - Potential for worsening depression
  - Disparities in access to healthcare (telehealth)
  - Intimate partner violence
- Stress
  - Work from home
  - Supervising remote schooling for other children
  - Uncertainty about maternity leave, access to childcare
- Economic consequences
  - Unemployment
  - Food or housing insecurity





# March 26, 2020 letter from NYC perinatal psychiatrists



*“We support the very difficult decision our hospital administrators have made to institute this visitor restriction policy.”*

*“As reproductive mental health experts, we are well-practiced at making difficult decisions in high-stakes situations where evidence is limited. We understand the “risk-risk” framework and the uncomfortable reality that there are circumstances in which potential harms, as well as our ability to mitigate them, must be weighed against each other. “*

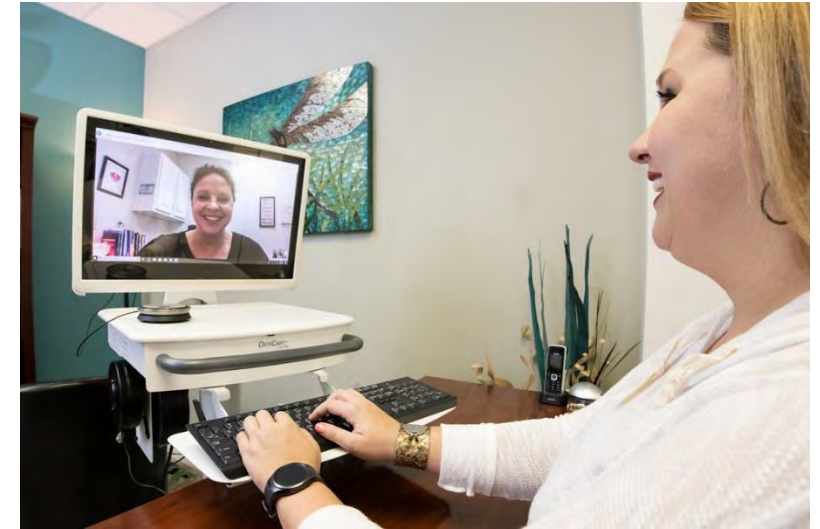
*“Given much collective experience working with laboring women, including those who have been separated from partners under different circumstances such as military deployments, we believe we in the Marcé community can offer meaningful strategies to mitigate the risk of psychological harms from this visitor restriction policy and to increase resilience in these patients.”*





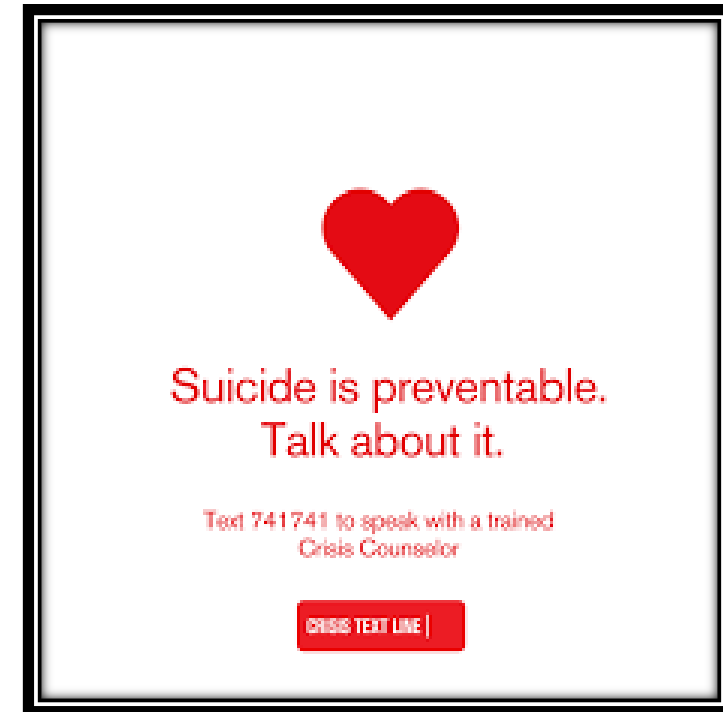
# Resources for Treatment

- Most mental health providers are offering telehealth services including psychotherapy and psychiatric consultation
- Many states have waived licensing regulations during public health emergency
- Current ability to provide audio-only (telephone) services may improve access, although not optimal for clinical care



# Resources for a Crisis

- Each area of NH, VT, ME is served by a community mental health center that operates 24 hour crisis services
- Psychiatric hospitals remain open and accepting patients
- Many partial hospital or IOP programs are either on hiatus or operating via telehealth
- Interpersonal Violence agencies are still operating
- Know your local (and national) resources



# Resources for Support

- Ask women how they are feeling/coping
- Normalize fears and worries; “we are all in this together”
- Acknowledge grief; “this was not what you expected for your pregnancy”
- Support behaviors that promote wellness:
  - Connecting with others
  - Mindfulness
  - Exercise
  - Letting go of unrealistic expectations
  - Limiting news consumption if it increases stress



# Resources for Coping

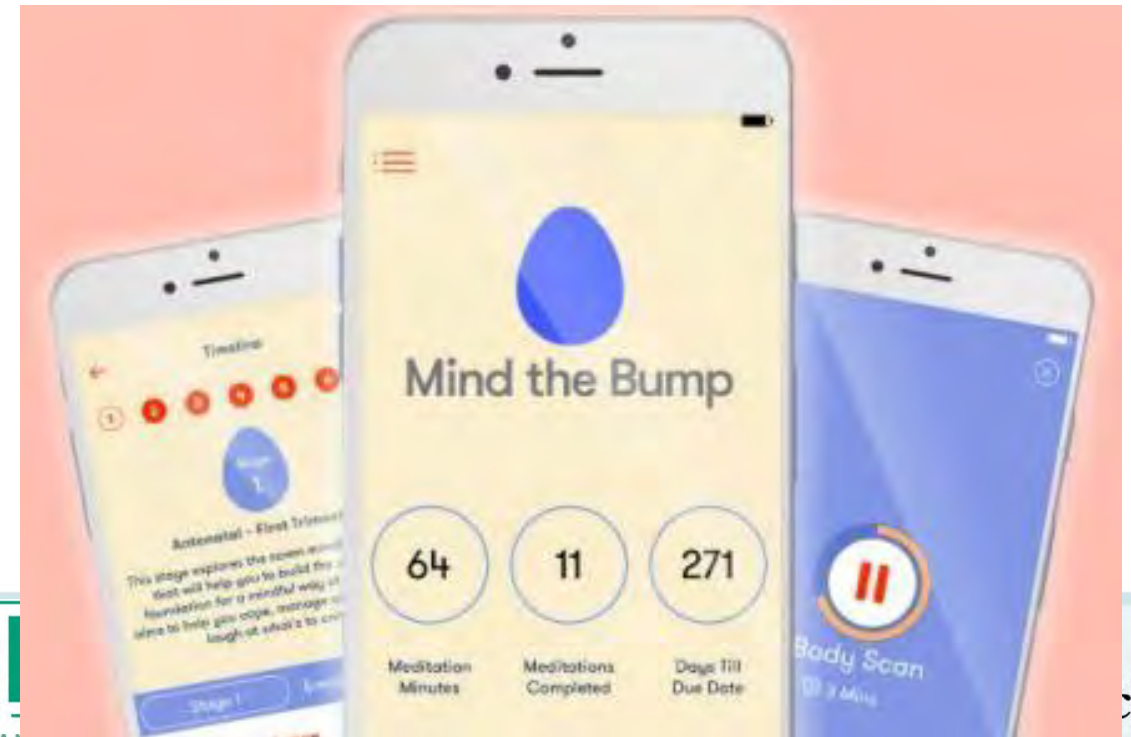
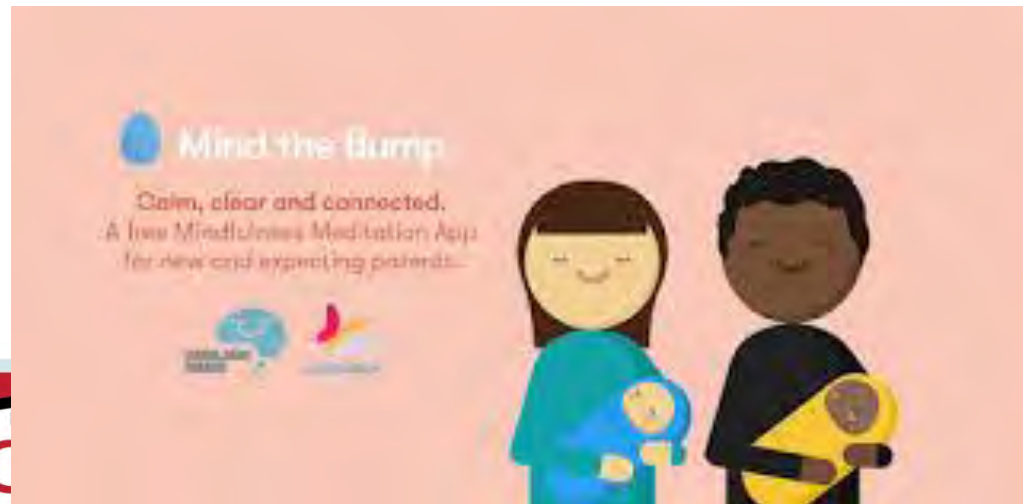
- Postpartum Support International
- [www.postpartum.net](http://www.postpartum.net)
- Helpline 1-800-944-4PPD(4773)
- State support coordinators
- Online support groups
- Chat with an expert
- Provider directory





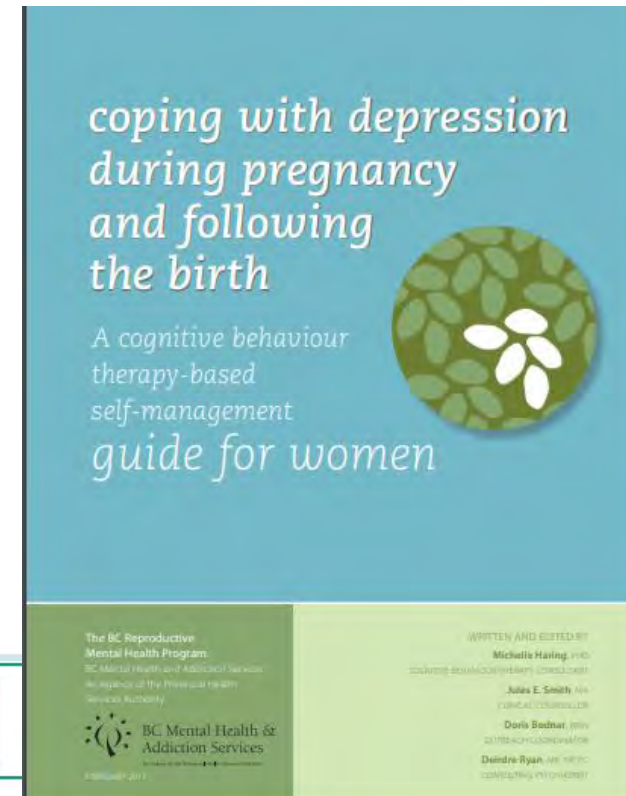
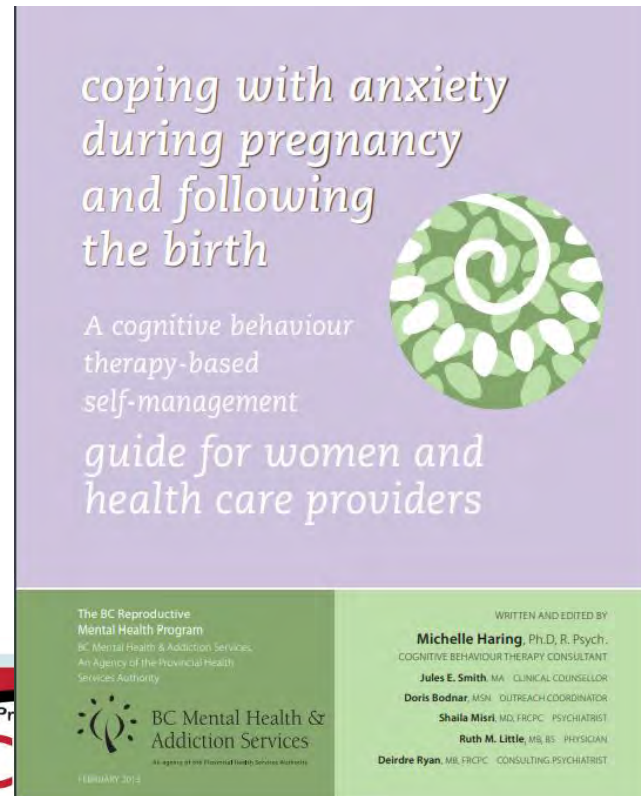
# Resources for Coping

- Mind the Bump mindfulness app
  - Free
  - Pregnancy-specific
  - Designed for women and partners
  - <https://www.mindthebump.org.au/>



# Resources for Coping

- Online self-help workbooks: <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/>



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NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

PERINATAL AND PREGNANCY CENTRE NETWORK

mouth-Hitchcock

# Summary

- Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders are common
- The current COVID-19 pandemic may increase risk for some women
- Resources are available for:
  - Mental health treatment
  - Crisis intervention
  - Peer support
  - Self-help/coping skills
- We are all in this together!

