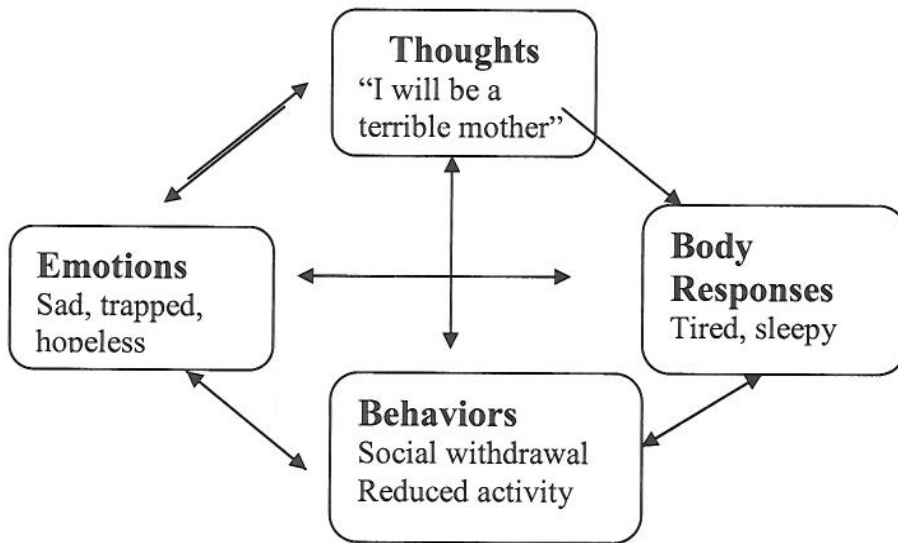


What are common symptoms of perinatal depression?

Symptoms of perinatal depression can be divided into four major categories. Each of these categories influences the others, as we will see.



1. Emotions (How we feel)

The emotions associated with depression can be described as feeling down, sad, blue, numb, empty, irritable or hopeless. Many women with perinatal depression will also say that they feel anxious, worried or tense.

2. Body responses (How our bodies react)

Depression impacts how we feel in our bodies. Women with depression may have feelings of fatigue, heaviness, sleep problems, restlessness, loss of appetite, low energy, concentration problems and racing heart.

3. Thoughts (What goes through our mind)

When we are depressed, our patterns of thinking are different. We tend to be very unrealistic and negative in the way that we think about. Depressed mothers may have negative thoughts about themselves as mothers or unrealistic worries about their infants or their health.

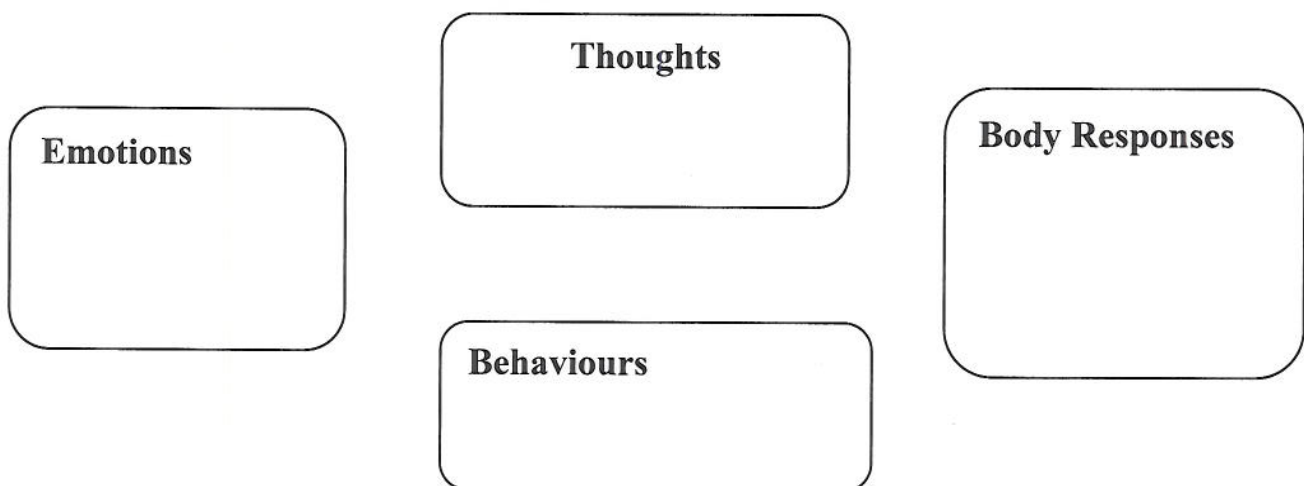
In cases of more severe depression, women may have thoughts of harming themselves or their babies. If this happens to you, it is important that you contact a health care professional immediately to discuss your symptoms and get the help that you need.

4. Behaviors (How we respond)

Depression affects our behaviors significantly. Some of the areas that are most affected by depression are: not taking time to eat, bath; not talking to your friends or answering the telephone; not doing activities that you enjoyed in the past; not doing daily activities such as making a meal. Often depressed women with a new baby will need supports in order to be able to change these behaviours (see reverse for an explanation).

Women may do these behaviours to reduce feelings of depression and in the short term they may make them feel better. However, sometimes these coping behaviours such as: not seeing anyone, self-medicating with substances or avoiding being alone with the baby can make depression worse.

Fill in some of your Thoughts, Body Responses, Emotions and Behaviors in this diagram. Discuss these with your health professional.



Each of these symptoms of depression (thoughts, emotions, body responses, behaviors) is related to the others and influences the others. So, even small changes in one area can lead to positive changes in other areas.

Changing behaviours is a logical and simplest step- refer to the opposite side of this page. If you are interested in further exploring your Thoughts and Emotions ask your health professional for a referral to a clinical counsellor, psychologist or mental health worker.