



Breastfeeding and Mental Health

A Postpartum Resource Guide





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Breastfeeding—and the decisions surrounding how to feed your baby—can be one of the most personal and overwhelming aspects of new motherhood. Many women struggle with the gap between the challenges they face and the societal expectation that breastfeeding should be effortless and natural. It's common to feel judged, unsupported, guilty, or even ashamed. These difficulties, along with the emotional toll they take, can heighten the risk of postpartum mental health challenges.

At Wildflower, we're dedicated to guiding you and your family through the psychological complexities of infant feeding and the adjustment to life with a newborn. This guide is designed to encourage open conversations about breastfeeding and maternal mental health, while also providing you with practical tools and valuable resources to help you navigate your breastfeeding journey.

Organizations and Websites

La Leche League

A worldwide educational, non-sectarian, not for profit, volunteer-based organization that helps mothers breastfeed through mother to mother support, encouragement, information and education about breastfeeding.

KellyMom

A website providing tons of resources and information on breastfeeding and the difficulties that can arise around it.

MotherToBaby

A non-profit organization that provides evidence-based information to parents and healthcare providers about the effects of medications, environmental exposures, and other factors during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Postpartum Support International (PSI)

A non-profit organization that increases awareness among public and professional communities about the emotional challenges that women experience during pregnancy and postpartum. PSI also provides support and connects individuals and families to resources and treatment for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.

Chocolate Milk

A website and educational platform that features a free documentary series aimed at exploring the racial disparities in breastfeeding.

Leaky Boob Community Facebook Group

A virtual community where mothers can connect, share experiences, and offer each other encouragement and advice on breastfeeding, feeding challenges, and the emotional and practical obstacles that can arise during the breastfeeding journey.

Exclusively Pumping Mamas- Education & Support Group on Facebook

A safe place for moms who exclusively pump to discuss pumping-related issues and support one another.

Fed is Best Facebook Group

A support community open to all families who are seeking guidance, encouragement, and resources to nourish their babies, with a focus on promoting safe, informed feeding choices, regardless of feeding method.

Mental Health Hotlines

Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988

Postpartum International Support Helpline:

1-800-944-4773

MOMS Line (for those in Illinois): 866-364-6667

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline: 833-852-6262

Articles

Why I Won't Celebrate My Breastfeeding Journey on Social Media

An article written by a mother who exclusively breast fed her children. Instead of highlighting this fact, she shares her thoughts about the issues with “Breast is Best” campaign and why it is essential to support all mothers, regardless of how they feed their babies.

Is it Impossible to Breastfeed and Have a Full-Time Job?

An article highlighting the stress and strain around breastfeeding due to minimal maternity leave and absence of other support for new mothers.

Is Breastfeeding Worth Our Mental Health?

An article discussing how the societal pressures of breastfeeding can affect a mother's mental health. Debunks myths around breastfeeding and explores what happens when breastfeeding does not go as planned.

Perinatal grief and breastfeeding. Preserving life. (English & Espanol)

Perinatal death is a topic that is typically overlooked when talking about breastfeeding. Psychologist Paola Vargas explores how the ritual of breastfeeding is also mourned with perinatal death and the additional toll this can have on the mother.

5 Mental Health Risks Many Lactating Parents Face

Moorea Malatt LEC, PMH-C discusses challenges related to breastfeeding and offers preventative supports and solutions.

Podcasts

Milk Minute

Two midwives and lactation professionals work to increase access to lactation education for all types of families while acknowledging mental health challenges. They touch on these important topics with some humor too.

I Am One

Postpartum Support International (PSI) staff reflect on their own lived experience during the perinatal period. They bring on guests who discuss how they sought and received mental health support.

3 Wildflower Center for Emotional Health



Breastfeeding Unplugged

A podcast dedicated to helping parents navigate the world of breastfeeding with the goal of making sure parents have all the information they need for their breastfeeding journey.

Makes Milk with Emma Pickett

Features stories from mothers who have faced challenges with breastfeeding

Breaking Barriers: The Mental Health Podcast

Season 2 Episode 1: Discussing Breastfeeding and Postpartum Depression. This episode covers baby blues, postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis and also explores the stigma around breastfeeding.

Mom and Mind

Episode 103: Breastfeeding, D-MER and Mental Health

Dr. Katayune Kaeni is a certified specialist in perinatal mental health and perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. She explores a wide variety of topics related to PMADs including breastfeeding.

MOMWELL

Episode 82: Is Breastfeeding Worth Our Mental Health?

Discusses the pressures from both self and society around breastfeeding and how they can affect a mother's mental health.

The Neurodivergent Birth Podcast

Season 3 Episode 9: Supporting Neurodivergent Lactation using Mindfulness Tools with Anna Le Grange

Books

Breastfeeding Doesn't Need to Suck: How to Nurture Your Baby and Your Mental Health by Kathleen Kendall-Tackett

Why Breastfeeding Grief and Trauma Matter by Amy Brown

Exclusively Pumping Breast Milk: A Guide to Providing Expressed Breast Milk for Your Baby by Stephanie Casemore

The Black Woman's Guide to Breastfeeding: The Definitive Guide to Nursing for African American Mothers by Katherine Barber

When Breastfeeding Sucks: What You Need To Know About Nursing Aversion and Agitation by Zainab Yate

Instagram Handles

Aloha.nutrition

A dietician and IBCLC Lactation Consultant, Allegra Gast is on a mission to “help mothers regain energy and thrive postpartum.” The team at Aloha Nutrition is aware of the difficulties with breastfeeding and how they can affect a mother’s mental health.

Karrie_locher

As a nurse and a mom, Karrie educates new mothers about breastfeeding and postpartum care.

Baremotherhood_

Dr. Casey Mercado is a lactation counselor who focuses on the difficulties and realities of pumping and breastfeeding.

Instinctualmothering

Andrea is a lactation counselor who provides resources, education, and support to expectant and new mothers.

Lalactation

A lactation consulting service addressing various challenges and obstacles that can often arise while breastfeeding.

Tips to Protect Your Mental Health While Breastfeeding

Seek Mental Health Support

Therapy can help you navigate negative thought patterns that may arise from the pressures and stigma around motherhood and breastfeeding. A therapist can provide tools to help you cope and build resilience.

Join a Support Group

Connecting with other mothers, whether you’re struggling with breastfeeding or facing mental health challenges like PMADs (Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders), can help reduce feelings of isolation, guilt, anxiety, or shame.

Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness techniques, such as deep breathing, being present in nature, or simply identifying and describing objects around you, can lower your heart rate and help you feel more grounded and present.

Prioritize Self-Care

Even if it's just for a few minutes, intentionally carving out time for self-care can make a big difference. Small acts of self-kindness can help recharge your emotional and mental health.

Educate Yourself on Infant Feeding

Learning about different infant feeding options, through evidence-based literature, can empower you to make informed decisions and reduce stress about feeding choices.

Read Books for Validation and Compassion

Choose books that validate your personal experience and foster self-compassion. Reading material that acknowledges your struggles can help you approach challenges with greater understanding and non-judgment.

Communicate with Your Support System

Be clear with your partner, family, or friends about the best ways they can support you. Let them know how they can offer validation and practical assistance during your breastfeeding journey.

If you are looking to start psychotherapy at Wildflower, please reach out to our intake team by calling 312.809.0298 or completing the inquiry form on our website.

