

Research Reviews

Promoting Mental Health During Pregnancy

Solchany, J.E. (2001) Promoting Maternal Mental Health During Pregnancy. NCAST Publications. Seattle, University of Washington. <http://www.ncast.org/>

This book is a resource everyone working with pregnant women should read and have. It is important to have your own copy since it serves as a reference for information and there are many useful applications for clinical practice. The first section of the book reviews the mental health of pregnancy. This aspect is rarely covered thoroughly in either medical or nursing textbooks. It emphasizes the transition to motherhood and the important factors influencing fetal brain development and the mother child relationship. Solchany also covers issues about involving others, dealing with culture and religious issues, dealing with resistance and dealing with mothers that “don’t do their home work.” The specific mental health issues discussed are pregnancy loss, family planning, domestic violence, depression, under and over ideal reproductive age mothers, disabilities, relinquishing mothers and adoption.

Section II is the “workhorse” of the book. It organizes approaches to clinical practice by describing appropriate assessments, including specific questions; how to evaluate the significance of answers; how to set specific goals and how to choose specific interventions. This begins by first outlining a mental health approach to problems in pregnancy and then detailing its relationship to denial, decisions about keeping the pregnancy, lack of support, related trauma, fear and anxiety related to pregnancy, substance abuse, depressive symptoms, actual or threats of harm to self, unsafe relationships, history of loss and trauma, childhood experiences of abuse and or neglect, relationship with mother, and lack of support. Practitioners will find clearly delineated issues to address; examples of questions to ask; explanations of the significance of findings; samples of goals and descriptions of specific interventions and actions.

Section III presents 57 activities that can be used with the mother. Each of the activities is integrated into the interventions discussed in Section II. All interventions presented in the book were reviewed by Washington nurses involved in the Nurse Family Partnership Program. A suggested list of interventions they frequently use is outlined in the Nurse Family Partnership Project Report on this Webb site.

(Reviewed by Kathryn E. Barnard)