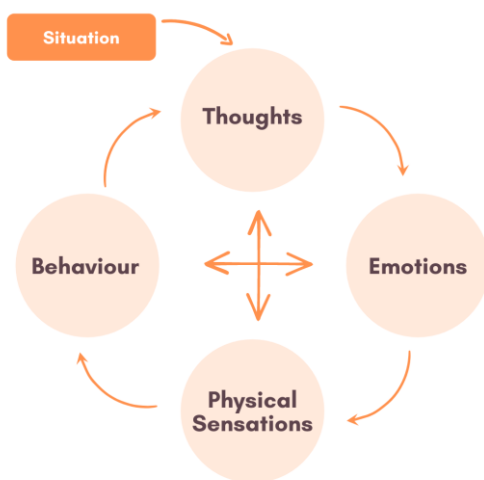


# Healthy Minds in Pregnancy & Beyond

## Participant Information Leaflet

### Mental health difficulties in pregnancy are common

Many women experience mental health difficulties such as low mood or anxiety in pregnancy. There are lots of reasons why we may be more vulnerable to these difficulties during this complicated and challenging time.



### Understanding our internal experiences

Every individual experiences situations differently - how we think about a situation can impact the emotions and physical sensations we experience. How we respond to these internal experiences through our behaviour may keep the cycle going.

### Practicing mindfulness gives us more control over how we respond to these internal experiences. Here are some ideas for mindful activities:

**Mindful Walking:** When you go for a walk, pay attention to your senses. Whether you're walking on the road or in nature, what sounds do you hear? What do you see and smell? How does the sun or wind feel on your face? You can also choose to narrow your attention of focus. For example, you can choose to pay attention to people's front gardens as you walk by houses. Let thoughts pass and bring your awareness back to the present moment and gardens in front of you.

**Mindfulness During Activities:** The good thing about mindfulness is that it can be used in most situations. Even if you don't have a large chunk of time to set aside, you can practice it. Doing simple activities with a mindful approach is a good way to get in your mindfulness practice. When you're doing an activity, really focus on it in that present moment. Evaluate your senses. How does that activity physically feel? What are the sounds? What does it look like? You can choose one sense to focus on or you can notice all of them. For example:

**Brushing your teeth**— Pay attention to how the bristles feel on your teeth or the taste of the toothpaste. Focus on the sound of the brush against your teeth.

**Standing in line**— Focus on the sounds: people talking, carts moving, cash registers, etc.

**Sitting at your desk**— Notice the sounds of typing keyboards or people walking by. Focus on the smell of coffee or the way the chair feels underneath you.

You can set a goal for yourself, such as to stop twice every day and name something you're experiencing for each sense.

**Find your personal daily reminder:** Choose a daily activity to act as a reminder to take a mindful moment - when you're making a cup of tea or getting a glass of water, going to the bathroom, when you see a traffic light or stop sign. You can also download an app or set a reminder on your phone throughout the day. Take a few deep breaths and try to focus on what's happening in the present moment.

# Home Practice: Mindfulness



Day	Mindful Activity	What did you notice			What was helpful?
		Thoughts	Feelings	Sensations	
Mon					
Tue					
Wed					
Thur					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					

## What is matrescence?

The physical, emotional, hormonal and social transition to becoming a mother

- May start at a different time for different people
- It can take time to settle into a new identity
- May arguably last a lifetime
- It occurs with each child
- Like adolescence, it is an individual process



## Reflection on Matrescence and Wellbeing

- How might difficulties show up during this period?
- What can you do to support yourself?
- What do you usually do when things get hard or you need help?
- Support-seeking – struggle is the natural state of having a baby – ‘it takes a village’ – how good are you at asking for help?
- How will you know if you are becoming overwhelmed?

## Skills Practice

### STOP

- **S** – Stop (don’t move a muscle)
- **T** – Take a breath (or 2 or 10, whatever you feel you need)
- **O** – Observe your surroundings (where are you? who are you with?)
- **P** – Proceed mindfully (what is the most **effective** thing for you to do?)



### Grounding through the senses

When you notice you are feeling overwhelmed, use your sense to ground yourself and bring yourself back to the present

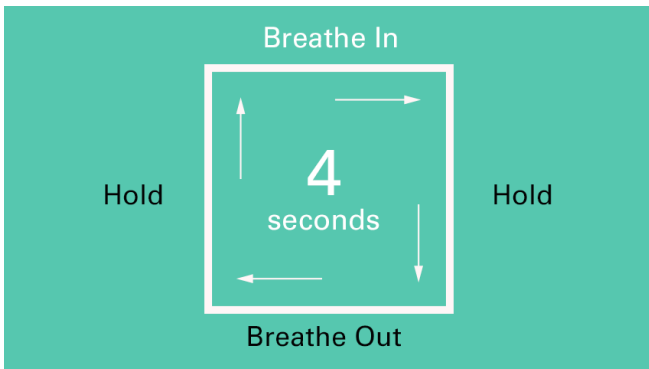
#### 5-4-3-2-1:

- 5 things you can **see**
- 4 things you can **feel**
- 3 things you can **hear**
- 2 things you can **smell**
- 1 thing you can **taste**



## Skills Practice (Continued)

### **Square Breathing**



- Breathe in for 4 seconds
- Hold for 4 seconds
- Breathe out for 4 seconds
- Hold for 4 seconds

### **Temperature**

Apply something cold to your eye area and breathe slowly or hold your breath for a count of 4.



### **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

#### **Preparation**

- Set aside 15 minutes
- Find somewhere quiet and comfortable where you will not be disturbed
- Remove your shoes
- Consult your doctor before performing PMR if you have any underlying medical conditions that hinder physical activity
- Do not perform PMR if you have pulled muscles or injuries.
- Before you begin, take five slow, deep breaths

#### **STEP ONE: TENSION**

- As you breathe in, deliberately and gently tense the first muscle group (below) as hard as you can.
  - Feel the tension in your muscles
  - It may cause some discomfort or shaking but not pain. If you do feel any pain or intense discomfort, do not continue.
  - Try to tense only the muscle group you are targeting
- Hold for five to ten seconds

#### **STEP TWO: RELAX THE MUSCLES**

- Then, while you exhale, quickly and fully relax the tensed muscles
- Focus on the changing sensations. If it helps, picture the feelings of stress leaving the body
- Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. You will feel the muscles become loose and limp

#### **STEP THREE: REST**

- Take 10 - 20 seconds and relax
- Repeat steps one, two and three, tensing and relaxing each of the muscles groups listed on the next page.

Muscle group	Action
Hands	Clench/make a fist.
Wrists and forearms	Extend and bend your hands back at the wrist.
Biceps and upper arms	Make a fist and bend your arms at the elbows, flexing your biceps.
Shoulders	Shrug them (raise them toward your ears).
Forehead	Wrinkle into a deep frown.
Around the eyes and bridge of the nose	Close your eyes as tightly as possible while remaining comfortable (preferably remove contact lenses before you start.)
Cheeks and jaws	Smile as widely as you can.
Back of the neck	Press the back of your head against your support (chair headrest or the floor.)
Front of the neck	Touch your chin to your chest, but avoid creating tension in your neck and head.
Chest	Take a deep breath and hold it for 5 to 10 seconds.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor or chair.
Hips and buttocks	Press your buttocks together tightly.
Thighs	Clench them hard.
Lower legs	Point your toes toward your face. Then point your toes away and curl them downward at the same time.