

BRAIN 2021

SESSION 15: PARENTAL MENTAL HEALTH

Becoming a parent is a life-defining event. Along with all the emotional highs and lows, new parents are forced to navigate competing demands of work and childcare (especially if they're the primary caregiver). All the while, their bodies are experiencing profound physiological changes (especially if they have given birth).

As new parents navigate this sensitive period, there are both risks and opportunities. How an individual experiences this time is informed by a range of factors, including: their early life, individual and societal stressors, cultural factors, and areas of strength and resilience. Through all of this, the brain becomes extraordinarily plastic, allowing for individual mastery across a diverse range of skills and in the context of widely-varying external circumstances.

This session focuses on this extraordinary moment in a parent's life and all of the neurobiological changes that go with it!

On Your Own

Read:

Beyond Bootstraps: Pulling Children Up With Evidence-Based Interventions

Prescribing Sleep: An Overlooked Treatment for Postpartum Depression

From Generation to Generation: Rethinking "Soul Wounds" and Historical Trauma (if you haven't read it already)

Watch:

The Father's Brain

How Pregnancy Dramatically Resculpts the Brain

In the News:

9 Ways Racism Impacts Maternal Health

The Birth of a Mother

With Your Pod (Or on Your Own)

New Brain, New Baby, New Connections

Assessment

At the end of Session 15, you should be able to answer the following:

1. **What is happening in the brain during the early postpartum period?**
2. **How can we support patients during the early postpartum period?**



When you're ready, click here to submit your responses.

Fun Extras!

Plasticity of the maternal brain across the lifespan

Neurobiology of culturally common maternal responses to infant cry

The neurobiology of postpartum anxiety and depression

Cash aid to poor mothers increases brain activity in babies

Podcast: postpartum depression

Neuroscience in the Media: Prenatal Stress

Sociocultural stress and maternal mental health (podcast 27-26)

More resources:

Podcast: Breastfeeding support for trainees

Podcast: Parental leave during training & its consequences

MGH Center of Women's Mental Health - Additional Resources