

Video 1: https://youtu.be/Xvjyg_36gdY
Video 2: https://youtu.be/sIBnxu_cCpk
Video 3: https://youtu.be/9jNH_2zC6NA
Video 4: <https://youtu.be/45ue1JxELFM>
Video 5: <https://youtu.be/JBL8nIFcNxU>
Video 6: <https://youtu.be/kJyOFhqyyks>
Video 7: https://youtu.be/xbuAmqo_Brc
Video 8: https://youtu.be/eZ7AZZmgG_k

Content of our Perinatal Video Series

Video 1 “Normal feelings after the birth of a baby, and feelings in the context of Covid-19”: Video 1 of the series normalises feelings mothers experience after the birth of their baby. It validates the additional challenges brought by Covid-19 and sets out the purpose of the video series. Here is an excerpt:

“Congratulations on the birth of your beautiful new baby. This is a very special and exciting time in your life, filled with many magical moments. It is also a particularly challenging time in history and this can affect how parents feel about being pregnant, or bringing a new little one into the world. Pregnancy, childbirth, and caring for a new baby can bring dramatic changes to your life and all of these adjustments can cause you to feel a variety of emotions. Expecting a baby can be a very happy and joyful time but it can equally feel daunting and overwhelming. Adjusting to parenthood, no matter how welcome, is stressful and even more so in the current context of Covid-19. It is important to remember that these stress and anxiety responses are normal”.

Video 2 “Back to basics: Caring for your basic needs”: Video 2 shares four main ideas with new parents about how to support themselves at this time. They include reaching out to others for support; getting their basic needs met; staying connected; and using this time to bond with their babies. Here is an excerpt:

“Stay connected: You may really miss not being able to introduce your baby to family and friends at this time. While we all need to ensure physical distancing at the moment, it is very important that now, more than ever, you remain socially and emotionally connected. Build your village and keep in touch by meeting up by phone / video calls and by social media with those you trust and whom you feel genuinely supported by. When possible, try to meet in person in line with public health guidelines. It is loving connection that counts and not only physical proximity”.

Video 3 “Taking time to care for your emotional health”: Video 3 focuses on self-care to support new mothers’ emotional health. It advises new mums to make time for themselves; practice mindfulness; self-compassion; and to seek support. Here is an excerpt:

“Practice Self-Compassion: Be kind to yourself and try to remember the value of being a ‘good enough’ parent. You may feel ashamed or guilty if you feel you are not coping with anxious thoughts, or the isolation you feel being away from some of your normal supports. Try to notice any harsh or self-critical feelings towards yourself. Instead be gentle and kind - your feelings are valid and understandable. Try to remember that it is completely normal to worry about yourself and your baby at difficult times like these”.

Video 4 “Bonding with your baby”: Video 4 highlights the importance of bonding with your baby, based on the “Head, Heart, Hands” model. It offers steps guiding parents to think about their baby’s thoughts and feelings, and to demonstrate their understanding through their actions with their babies. Here is an excerpt:

“HANDS: This is about showing your baby that you understand how they are they are thinking and how they are feeling. It involves doing and saying things that let your baby know that you “get” them. Let them feel understood by nodding, mirroring the expression on their face and using reflective words such as ‘I see you need a cuddle’ or ‘Oh dear, you seem uncomfortable’. Talking to your baby about their feelings might feel a bit silly when you know they don’t yet understand the words but your tone, gestures and facial expressions are already helping them to learn about their own feelings. This will help to soothe them and feel close to you”.

Video 5 “Building a happy baby”: Video 5 is based around the “Building a Happy Baby” poster project developed by the Galway Early Years Committee (CYPSC) with Galway Parent Network, which has 4 posters with common myths, truths, and key messages to help parents bond with their babies. Here is an excerpt:

“(Poster 4) New babies have a strong need to be close to their parents, as this helps them to feel secure and loved, like they matter in the world! When babies’ needs for love and comfort are met, they will be calmer and grow up to be more confident.

When babies feel secure, they release a ‘love’ hormone called oxytocin, which acts like a fertiliser for their growing brain, helping them to be happier and more confident as they grow older. Holding, smiling and talking to your baby also releases soothing oxytocin in you. This makes you both feel calm and happier.

Remember that it is never too late to build on your relationship with your baby. This very often requires you to mind yourself as a parent and to seek support when needed. And finally, aiming to be a ‘good enough’ parent is just that... enough”.

Video 6 “Understanding Difficult Feelings after you have had a baby”: Video 6 speaks to new mothers about difficult feelings they might experience after having

a baby. It discusses the “Baby Blues”, Depression, and Anxiety and advises parents how to cope with these feelings and where to seek help. Here is an excerpt:

“There can be an assumption that when we give birth this will be accompanied by a “rush of love” for the baby which then provides the fuel for a strong bond. Sometimes, however, there is no immediate rush of love, and the bond can feel weaker than we would like. If we respond with shame, criticism or worry then the struggle to bond feels even harder.

New mothers battle with thinking ‘it’s just me’ around these emotions and often criticise themselves. Lack of sleep can have an impact on how we feel. The way motherhood is portrayed in the media can add pressure. New mothers often compare themselves to other mothers. There can be growing feelings of guilt, self-blame and a fear of reaching out. Yet during the period after giving birth, we are wired to need support from others”.

Video 7 “The compassionate model for difficult emotions after having a baby”:

Video 7 uses a diagram, held by the speaker on the screen to describe the Compassion-Focused Therapy approach and its 3 colour-coded emotional systems, namely the Threat system (red), the Drive system (blue), and the Soothing system (green). This video describes the impact of each emotional system on mothers’ feelings, and how balancing them enables them to think clearly and be compassionate towards themselves and others. Here is an excerpt:

“As mothers, if we are feeling high levels of threat it can be difficult to experience the positives associated with having a baby. Pregnancy, birth, recovery and caring for a small baby can lead to extreme fatigue, which can also reduce the positive emotions associated with the Drive system. If we blame and criticise ourselves for not being able to delight in our baby, we may trigger more threat and inadvertently feel worse.

When we start to feel bored or low or depressed it’s important to plan things that can stimulate our positive emotion Soothing system. Contact with others can stimulate the positive emotions associated with this system. Small acts which give us a sense of achievement such as making the bed or putting on a wash on might be enough to stimulate enough energy to do something else, improving our mood further”.

Video 8 “Baby Meditation: ‘Being with’ your baby”: Video 8 is a guided meditation, with a voice over to accompanying music. Here is an excerpt:

“Slow down. Breathe. Notice your baby’s breathing. Just observe. Notice any thoughts and feelings that come to your attention, let yourself feel whatever you are feeling without judging it. Thoughts and feelings come and go like watching scenery through a train window flying by.

Take your baby's hand and fingers in your hand gently and notice what it feels like to feel your baby's skin and tiny fingers. Again, notice any thoughts, feelings and physical sensations you experience. Allow them to come and go without judging. Breathe and allow yourself to feel whatever you are feeling. Just Breathe in through your nose, hold it, and breathe out through your mouth.

Take your baby's foot in your hand and very gently feel how soft and tiny it is. Notice again any feelings or thoughts. You may feel joy, worry, sadness, loneliness. You may notice thoughts sitting alongside the feeling like: "Will the future be OK for my baby?" "Will I be a good parent?"

Whatever you think and feel, know that it is normal at this time. Know that you can manage whatever comes. Put your hands on your heart and feel kindness towards yourself.

Remind yourself that you are ok and that this will pass".

Further sources of information / resources:

www.mychild.ie – A HSE website with Information on pregnancy and the first 3 years of your child's life

HSE My Pregnancy book – Expert advice for every step <https://www2.hse.ie/file-library/child-health/my-pregnancy-book.pdf>

HSE book My Child: 0-2 years – Expert advice for every step <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/my-child-0-to-2-years.pdf>

HSE Perinatal Mental Health: The National Programme for Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services has launched a series of information leaflets to support women and their families experiencing mental health difficulties during pregnancy and in the baby's first year. To access these resources, as well as a poster on '10 things to know about Perinatal Mental Health' see:

www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/specialist-perinatal-mental-health/

www.cypsc.ie - Children and Young People Services Committee (search page for your county)

www.tusla.ie/parenting-24-seven - **TUSLA website** with key messages on what works best for children and families at different ages and stages.

www.onefamily.ie – National organisation for **one parent families**

www.barnardos.ie - Barnardos Parent Telephone Support Line 1800 910 123 (Monday-Friday 10am-2pm or email parentsupport@barnardos.ie)

www.accord.ie - Accord Couples and Relationship Support Line 01 531 3361 (Monday-Friday 9am-8pm).

www.stillhere.ie - Still Here Support Services for Domestic Abuse (Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Domestic Violence Helpline; Male Advice Line; Dublin Rape Crisis Centre National 24hr Helpline).

www.familyresource.ie – Information on the locations and contact details of all the family resource centres

HSE web page on **Ante-natal**

classes:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/antenatal-classes.html>

World Health Organization – <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-pregnancy-childbirth-and-breastfeeding>

www.uhgmaternity.com – Provides up to date information for expectant parents on **ante-natal classes, labour, post-natal care** for Mum and baby etc. as well as factsheets re COVID-19 and pregnancy

www.breastfeeding.ie – HSE webpage with information, advice and support on **breastfeeding**