





# Supporting Transitions, Attachment and Relationships (STAR Mums) Program

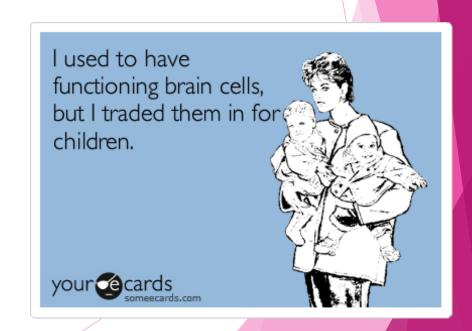
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#### Transition to Parenthood

- Pregnancy major physical, biological, cognitive and emotional adjustment
- Change to identity
  - Self as an individual and self as a mother
  - ► High expectations and low status
  - Ambivalence
- Changes to relationships
  - Partner
  - Own mother and family
  - Work colleagues





### Pregnancy

- Attachment relationship begins to develop
- Primary Maternal Preoccupation preoccupation with the baby's needs
- Adverse experiences impact development and later parenting
- Ambivalence and anxiety



### Parental Reflective Function

▶ RF – using underlying mental states to understand one's own and others' behaviour

▶ PRF – understanding the child's internal experiences and responding appropriately

In pregnancy – mental representation of unborn child and developing relationship



### Risks

- Mother
  - ▶ Mental illness depression or anxiety
  - ► Early trauma or abuse
  - Poor early parenting experiences
  - Psychosocial stressors
  - ► Substance abuse

- Baby
  - ► Impaired development
  - ► Relational trauma

# Gaps

- ► Early intervention and prevention of disturbed interactions
- Little research of high risk parents in pregnancy
  - No focus on attachment or relational outcomes
- No published studies of a psychological, attachment-based group intervention in pregnancy

#### **Aims**

- Explore feasibility and acceptability
- Program evaluation
- Explore experiences of the transition
- Explore the development of PRF
- Impact on early mother-infant interactions



### **STAR Mums Program**

Five weekly 1.5 hour group sessions

- Psychoanalytic, attachment-based intervention
  - Facilitating transition to parenthood
  - Preparing for the mother-infant relationship
  - Reducing risk factors
  - Strengthening PRF





# STAR Mums Program

Module Topic	Purpose
Module 1: Becoming a Parent	Elaboration of issues related to pregnancy, becoming a parent for the first time and common experiences of anxiety.
Module 2: Attachment	Focus on the influence of past experiences on parenting and what could be done differently and the same.
Module 3: Relationship with the Baby	Discussion about expectations of the baby when they arrive and the influence of culture and social networks.
Module 4: Thinking about the Baby	Exploration of the developing relationship with the baby and the importance of reflecting on the baby and their role in the family.
Module 5: Moving Forward	Focus on thinking ahead to the birth, early parenting and becoming a mother for the first time.

# **Participants**

- ▶ 18 years +
- Basic English
- Pregnant women: 20-30 weeks gestation
- First-time mothers
- At risk
- Antenatal care at RWH





### Design

- Pilot study
- Mixed-methods
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - Questionnaires
  - ► Follow-up
- Approximately five groups of five primiparas



## Timing of measures

	Screening (T0)	Baseline (T1)	Session 1 (T2)	Session 2 (T2)	Session 3 (T2)	Session 4 (T2)	Session 5 (T2)	Post-group (T3)	Birth (T4)	12-16 weeks (T5)
Eligibility criteria	Χ									
Informed consent	Χ									
Sociodemographic & Medical history (including pregnancy and delivery related information)		Х							X	
EDPS		Χ								
PAI		Χ								
CTQ		Χ								
WMCI (prenatal version)		Χ								
Semi-structured interview questions		Χ	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Χ	Х	Х
PDI										Χ
EAS										Χ
MIRS										Χ



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"There is no such thing as a baby... if you set out to describe a baby, you will find you are describing a baby and someone" (Winnicott, 1966).



