

Helping Women in Their Transition to Motherhood:

Finding Meaning and Purpose
in Their New Role as Mothers



Tamara Feldman, PsyD
Massachusetts Institute for Psychoanalysis,
Faculty
Tufts Medical School, Adjunct Faculty

126 Prospect Street, #5
Cambridge, MA

27 Mica Lane
Wellesley, MA
617.354.2982

motherhood@drfeldman.org

meaningfulmotherhood.org
couplescounselingboston.org

----- Goals of Workshop -----

----- Background -----

- Overemphasis on childbirth, physical care of baby, and acquiring necessary supplies (e.g. baby registries)
- Underemphasis on motherhood as a meaningful and transformative experience

----- Goals of Intervention -----

- Approach motherhood thoughtfully and intentionally
- Explore the personal meanings of motherhood
- Redefine identity, priorities, and relationships
- Identify hopes, fears and wishes about becoming a mother
- Lay foundation for lifelong relationship with child
- Promote personal growth

----- Basic Premises -----

- Motherhood as a crisis
- Radical challenge one's identity, priorities, life purpose, roles and relationships
- Crises as an opportunity for growth
- Growth predicated on generating new meanings

----- Theories Underlying Intervention -----

- Meaning Theory
- Growth Theory
- Mindfulness

Thought Questions

- 1) What feelings and thoughts led to your wanting to be a mother?
- 2) What do you imagine being a mother will be like? How do you hope it will transform your life?
- 3) Describe the kind of mother you would like to be.
- 4) Describe the kind of relationship you'd like to have with your child.
- 5) What strengths do you bring to the role of mother?
- 6) What will be challenging for you as a mother?
- 7) What qualities or skills would you like to work on to be a better mother

Becoming a mother inevitably evokes thoughts and feelings about our own mothers. Exploring these thoughts and feelings is an important part of understanding what motherhood means to you and can positively impact your ability to mother.

- 1) Describe 2-3 early memories of your own mother.
- 2) Describe your relationship with your mother growing up (you can choose an age/age range).
- 3) What strengths did she have as a mother?
- 4) What were her challenges or shortcomings as a mother?
- 5) What would you like to learn or improve on from your mother's mothering?
- 6) 30 years from now, how would you like your child to answer the question, "Describe your relationship with your mother growing up"?
- 7) List 3-4 qualities or attributes you want to develop in your child. Why are these qualities/attributes important to you? What will you do to foster them?

- 8) List 3-4 values you'd like to pass on to your child. Why are these values important to you? What will you do to foster them?
- 9) Are there rituals or traditions you'd like to establish prior to or after the baby's arrival that reflect these values or qualities?

Good communication with your partner/spouse will strengthen your relationship as partners and parents, and make the transition to motherhood easier.

- 1) Have you and your partner talked about your parenting philosophies, including values and qualities you'd like to foster in your child?
- 2) How well do you think you'll work together as co-parents? What strengths do you bring to co-parenting?
- 3) What challenges will you face as co-parents?
- 4) Do you anticipate differences in your parenting approaches? Have you thought about ways of addressing these differences?
- 5) How will you nurture your relationship/marriage in the face of great responsibilities and demands on your time?
- 6) List three values you'd like to pass on to your child.
- 7) List three qualities or attributes you want to develop in your child.

