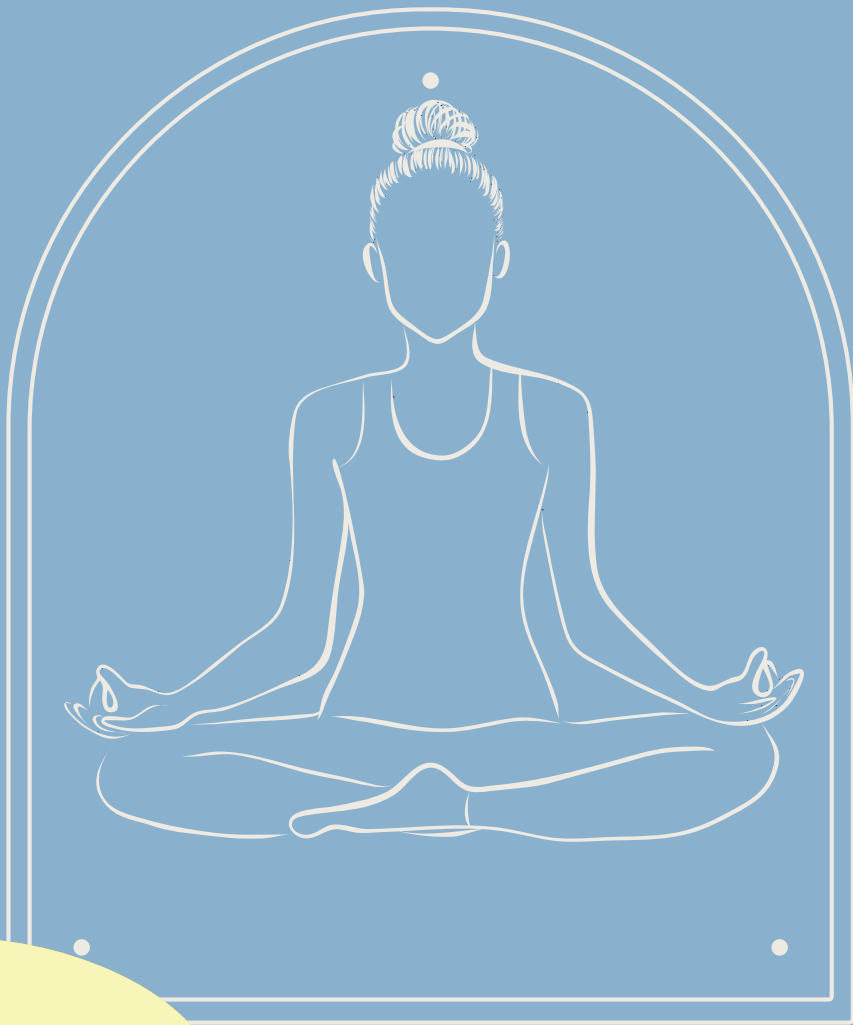


Managing mental health in pregnancy



Your guide to managing your mental health during pregnancy, when you feel far from blooming.

Celia Jarvis

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So, you're going to have a baby. And you feel like you should be blooming, thriving, over the moon. But in reality you're just overwhelmed. Probably worried about money, and wondering if you've made the right decision.

Perhaps your relationship is a little rocky, your pregnancy was unplanned or maybe you're even scared to trust in the process after previous miscarriages or failed rounds of IVF.

And then, of course, there's often the all-day nausea to contend with. Morning sickness is the biggest misnomer ever, it's more like having gastric flu for 12 long weeks. And that level of ill can really rob all the pleasure from the first few months of your pregnancy.

Looking at it from this angle it's no surprise you're feeling depressed, flat, disconnected or anxious.


And perhaps the biggest irony of all is that even though all these feelings are common, you'll hardly ever hear them talked about on TV or featured in glossy magazines.

It can seem as though the whole world has conspired to make you believe that your experience of pregnancy is uniquely difficult and you are falling at the first hurdle of becoming a mum.

Nine months can feel an absolute eternity if you're anxious, worried or losing your sense of self. So, it's my hope that this guide will support you through the early months of pregnancy.


First, there'll be some realistic and reassuring quotes from celebrities who've spoken candidly about their own experience of pregnancy, followed by two full pages of research backed tips to help you manage your mental wellbeing during this time. After this, I'll offer you my pick of the best books on the topic, before finishing with signposting to supportive organisations who specialise in pregnancy advice and information.

I hope this guide will be useful to you, and if you have any questions please email celia@cappuccinocounselling.com



'The pregnancy, I wouldn't really wish that upon anyone. Anyone. It's all worth it in the end, so I would definitely suffer through that, but pregnancy was not a good experience for me. At all.

Kim Kardashian, reality TV star

A photograph of Amy Schumer standing outdoors by the ocean. She is wearing a bright red, spaghetti-strap dress and has her hair styled in a braid. Her hands are resting on her pregnant belly. The background shows a calm sea under a soft, hazy sky, with some coastal vegetation in the foreground.

“It's been pretty tough. I didn't know pregnancies could be such a bummer. I threw up on my way here.”

Amy Schumer,
comedian

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AWARDS

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"Throwing up, drowsy, terrible colds,
and in a rush to finish my album so I
could start doing music videos before
I started showing. I spent 24 hours for
months sleeping on a couch with my
pregnant depressed ass in a studio

Cardi B, singer

Science backed tips for managing your mental health during a difficult pregnancy

Seek support

12 weeks is a long time to be battling nausea, and research suggests that severe morning sickness can lead to loss of motivation, a flat mood and even depression. If this is you and you feel your morning sickness is morphing into a mental health issue, then please do seek support. Although your healthcare professional is unlikely to prescribe anti-sickness medication during pregnancy, they can advise on aspects of diet, relaxation and even alternative therapies which may help ease the symptoms. If you have a good relationship with your employer, and, crucially, feel they are fair and decent, then you may want to consider telling them earlier on in your pregnancy so they can support you in managing your symptoms.

Don't panic if your pregnancy is emotionally hard but do take care of yourself

It would be delusional to think that all pregnancies occur at the perfect time, within a settled relationship, without any financial worries. If you've discovered your pregnant just as you've realised your relationship is going down the drain, then this is undoubtedly going to be a really tough time. You will worry, there will likely be really unpleasant arguments and you may spend a lot of time in tears. It is all deeply sad and unsettling. On top of this there is some research to suggest that a mother's moods can be felt, and absorbed, by her unborn child.

Instead of feeling guilty or alarmed, all you can do is make the effort to stay calm and protect your peace. More than ever self-care needs to be practiced and your mental health needs to be protected. Some anger or sadness is unavoidable but it's also imperative to make time for rest, relaxation and connecting with loved ones.

Take it easy for 12 weeks

The first twelve weeks can be an unsettling time for most pregnant people. The high chance of miscarriage; the sickness; the imminent life change; the financial squeeze and the thought of your freedom floating out of the door. All these factors can combine to create a dizzying sense of overwhelm.

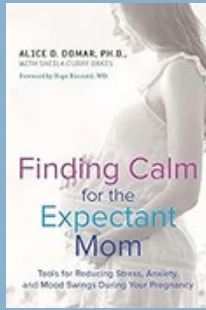
However, hold on to hope. Because after about 12 weeks, both the sickness and the mental overwhelm start to ease. Therefore if there's anything major on the horizon e.g. a job hunt, a dissertation to be finished or a divorce to file for, then it's usually better to leave it until after the three month mark. Most pregnant women feel better, think better and have a more positive outlook on the future after the fug of those first few months has passed. Tommy's, the UK's largest pregnancy and baby loss charity, has put together this [excellent guide for helping you through the first trimester](#).

See what your local GP can offer

Don't discount what your local practice can do for you. I know typically a visit to the doctors can mean you chatting away while they barely look up from their notes, but in the case of pregnancy support they really are the best port of call.

They can link you in with their social prescribers or community navigators, who'll be able to point you in exactly the right direction for supportive pre-natal clubs, communities and coffee mornings. And if think you might benefit from talking therapy to help with anxiety or low mood then they can also refer you to an NHS therapist.

The best books for the dark days of difficult pregnancies



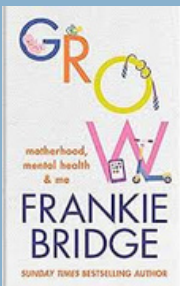
Finding Calm for the Expectant Mom by Alice D. Domar

If you can overlook the soft focus, pastel hued front cover, then this is a great book full of tips on staying calm and blooming, when you've conceived and are carrying a pregnancy in less than perfect circumstances. It takes a clear eyed look at the reality of pregnancy, and hopefully you'll feel less alone after reading it.



Matrescene by Lucy Jones

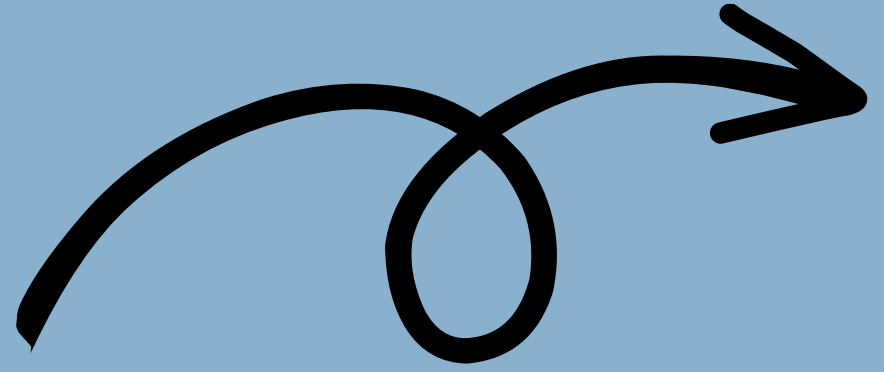
It's possible to be pleased that you're pregnant but also fearful about the freedom you're going to lose. Matrescene by Lucy Jones shows us that pregnancy is all about paradox, and to have feelings of doubt, despair or depression is all completely normal.



Grow by Frankie Bridge

I don't normally recommend books authored by celebrities, but this is the exception to the rule. Pop star and tv presenter, Frankie Bridge, writes openly about her struggles with mental health and the anxiety that comes with growing and nurturing new life while also juggling other demands,

Signposting: organisations that can give you the support you need



Whatever your situation throughout your pregnancy, professional support is available

Citizens Advice - if you're thinking about separation, your financial situation or wondering about child support then Citizen's Advice is a great place to start. You can make an appointment with an advisor on line or just drop in if you have some spare time

GP surgery. Probably better than you imagine for all things pre-natal, including emotional support. Start with your midwife or GP who can link you in to a range of local resources - communities, clubs, coffee mornings to help you feel less alone.

Pregnant then screwed <https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/>

If only all employers were fair and decent then we wouldn't need a site like this. But they're not and we do. Take a look as soon as you can so you know what your rights are, and how to protect them. I hope you don't need them, but they have proved to be a vital resource for many a pregnant woman.

I really hope you've found this guide useful, and that you now feel a little more reassured and positive about your pregnancy.

Despite what society would have you believe, pregnancy is often a confusing and overwhelming time. We're not all glowing throughout these nine months and it's not unusual for our sense of self to wobble and waver.

If you're interested in learning more about self-esteem or considering counselling with me, then get in touch
celia@cappuccinocounselling.com



Cappuccino Counselling

Where better self-esteem begins