



Breastfeeding and Mental Health

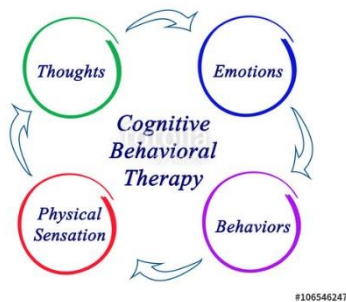
Wendy Jones and Beth Chapman

I am very proud to be presenting this session at the Bfn Conference in October with my daughter Beth who is a Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist working within the NHS. It feels like a legacy that my passion for breastfeeding has passed to all my daughters – and my 4 grandchildren. Beth and I have spoken at conferences together before but never co-presented.

Peri natal mental health issues affect very many women, and this is apparent in the media regularly. Add in breastfeeding and worse still add in medication and you have a mass of mis information and stress for mums trying to find their way through the maze.

One of the problems with society is that it is so easy to get caught up comparing ourselves with everyone else. How good a parent am I? Does your baby gain weight faster than mine? Is mine gaining too fast? What about sleep – shall we avoid the discussion?

When we give birth, we become hyper vigilant to dangers around our babies. It is all too easy for that to become anxiety about everything. Anxiety is horrible – it affects our thoughts, our moods and behaviours and that is where CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) comes in. It recognises the vicious cycle and provides a way to break that. It isn't easy, it takes time and perseverance, but it is possible.



Sometimes we need medicines to enable us to challenge the thoughts we have, be they within anxiety or the black dog of depression, the feeling that the Demontors, well known to Harry Potter fans, are nearby. Depression can also be helped by CBT.

It is really sad that doctors don't actually receive training at undergraduate level about breastfeeding and their knowledge tends to be accumulated by experience – possibly by mentors but also by personal and friend experiences. The licensing of medicines taken for any condition in a breastfeeding woman is complex and in our increasingly litigious country it is hard for them to draw the balance between the need to treat the mum and the need to keep the baby safe from the amount of drug passing through milk. I make these decisions multiple times every day and have both experience and expert databases. I also have time which they don't in a busy surgery.

I'm not going to give away our presentation or you might not come to the conference. We don't have all the answers, but we may have some solutions to offer and a safe forum for discussion.

See you in Birmingham

©Dr Wendy Jones Pharmacist Breastfeeding and Medication
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