

POST PARTUM HARM THOUGHTS
Perinatal Anxiety Research Lab
parlab.med.ubc.ca

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WE HAVE LOTS OF THOUGHTS ALL THE TIME



SOME THINGS WE CHOOSE TO
THINK ABOUT



SOME THOUGHTS JUST "POP"
INTO OUR HEADS

● OUR THOUGHTS CAN BE... ●



IMAGES

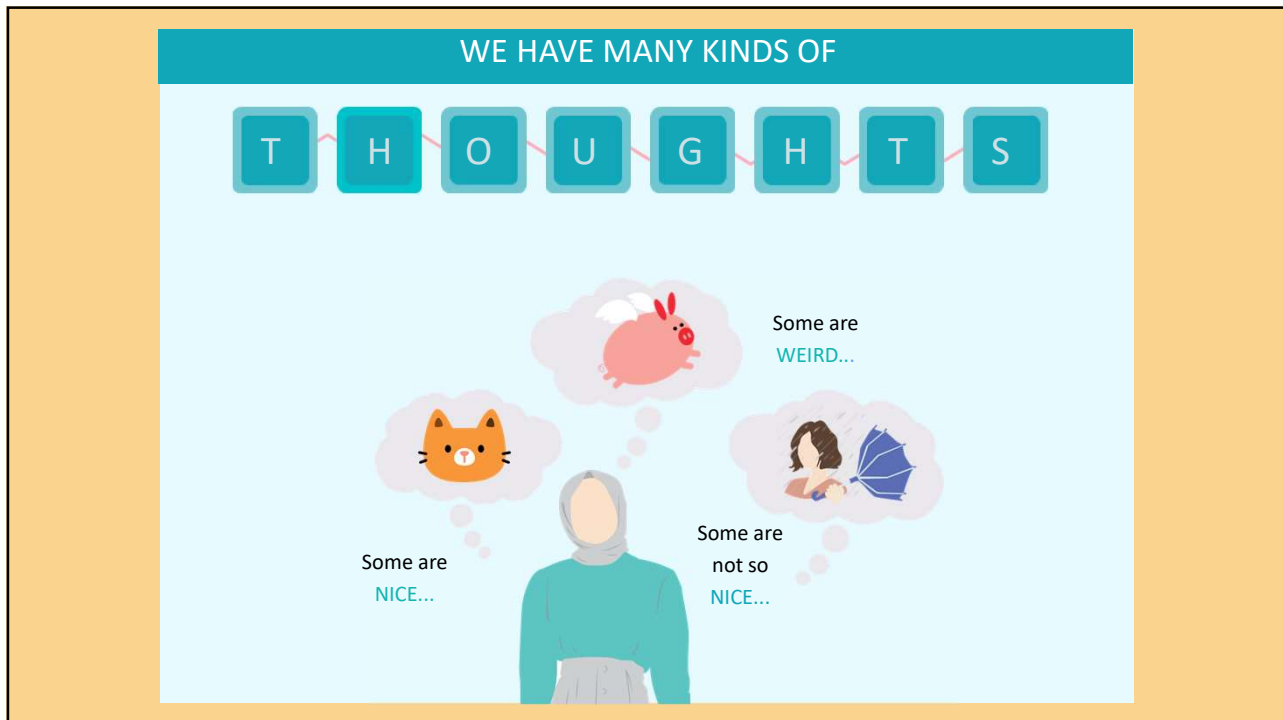


WORDS

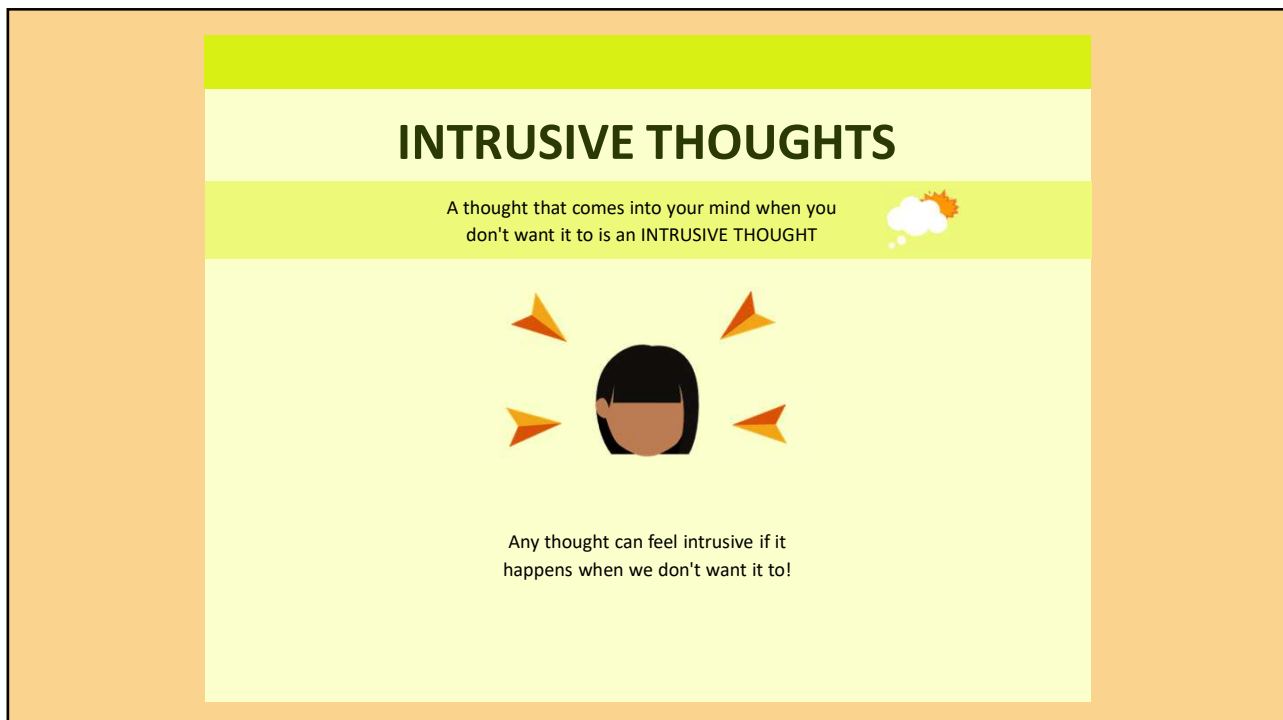


URGES

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WHY DO I THINK THE THINGS I THINK?

We're more likely to think about the things we're **preoccupied** with....

Intrusive thoughts are more **common** when we're **stressed out**!



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DO I NOTICE ALL MY INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS?

NOPE!

The ones I ignore

- The thought is kind of **BORING**
- It doesn't apply to **ME**
- It's nice but **NOT A BIG DEAL**
- It's a part of the **ENVIRONMENT**



The ones I pay attention to

- ✓ It's really **UPSETTING**
- ✓ It's about **ME**
- ✓ It makes me think **I'M A BAD PERSON**
- ✓ This could **REALLY HAPPEN!**



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WHY ARE SOME INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS OPPOSITE OF WHAT I WANT?

We are more likely to pay attention to intrusive thoughts about things we don't want to happen!



What if my baby gets sick



Saying your ex's name with your wedding vows

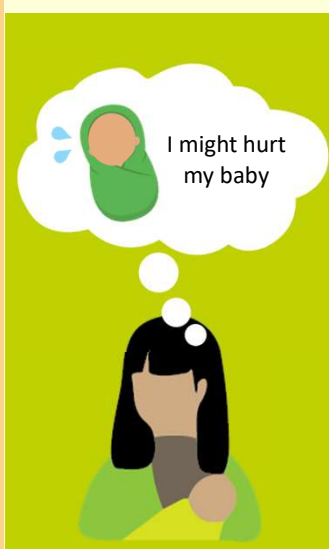


Swearing at your boss

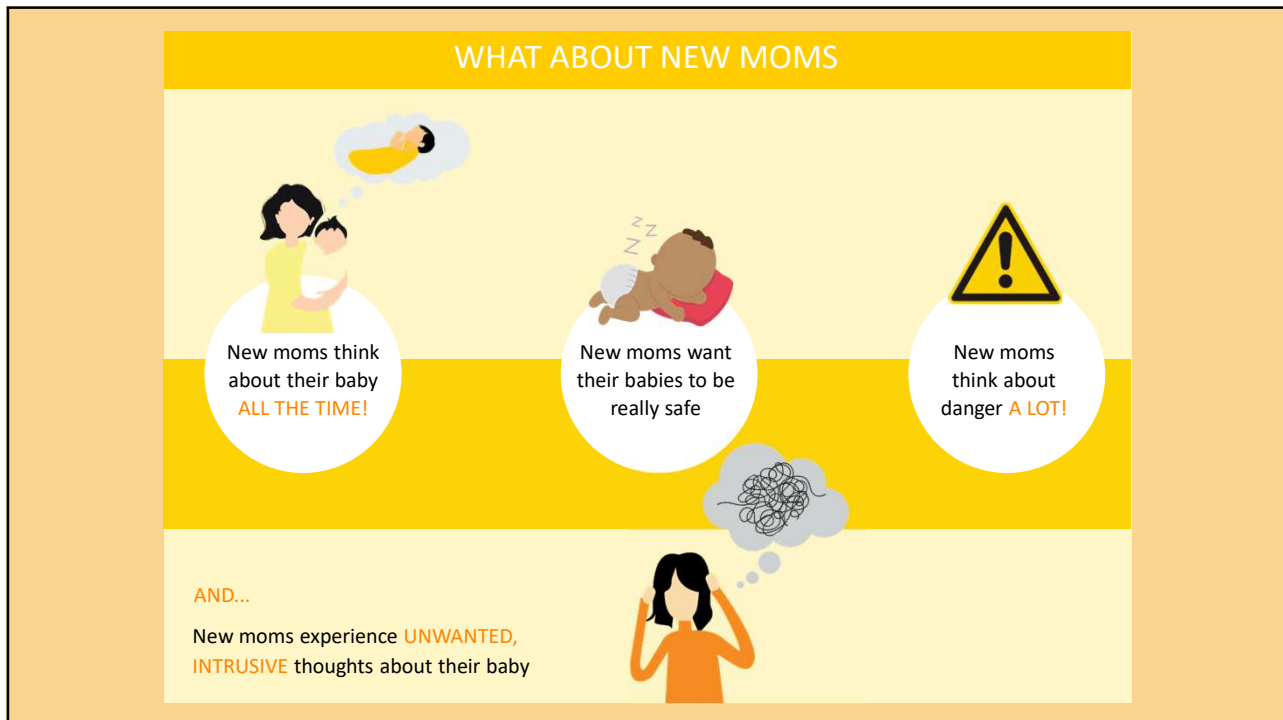


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WHO EXPERIENCES WHICH THOUGHTS



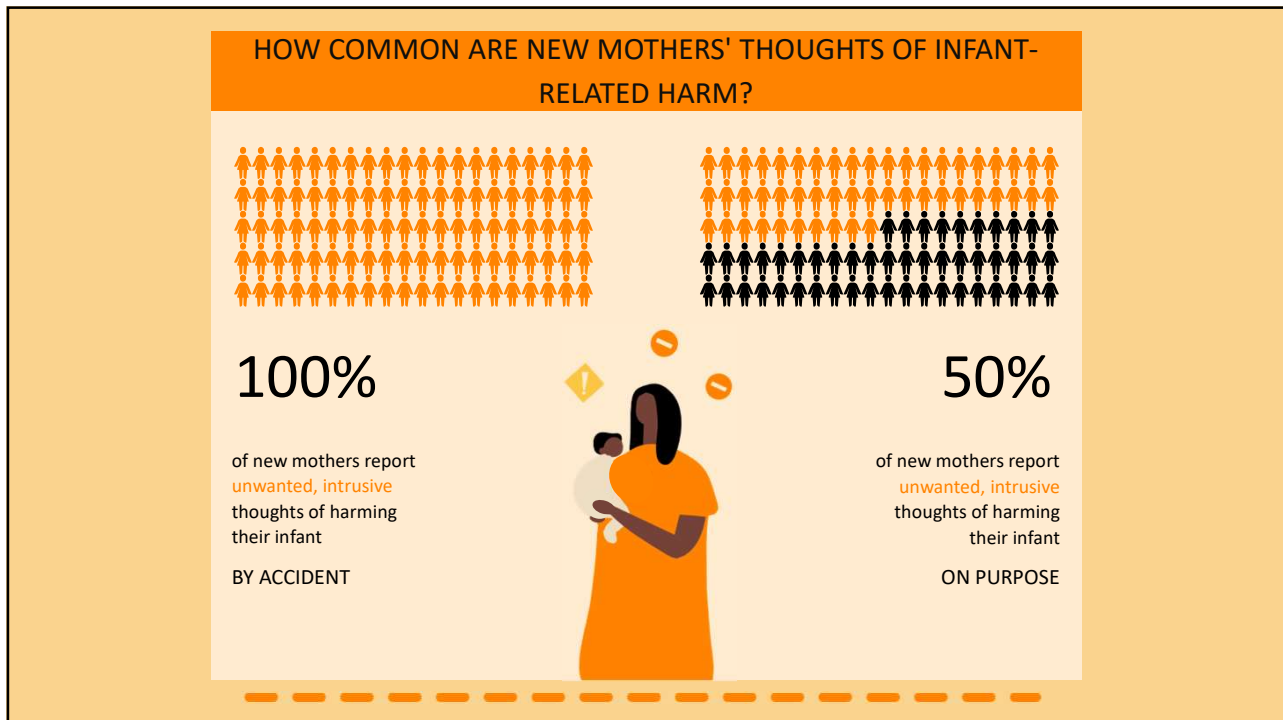
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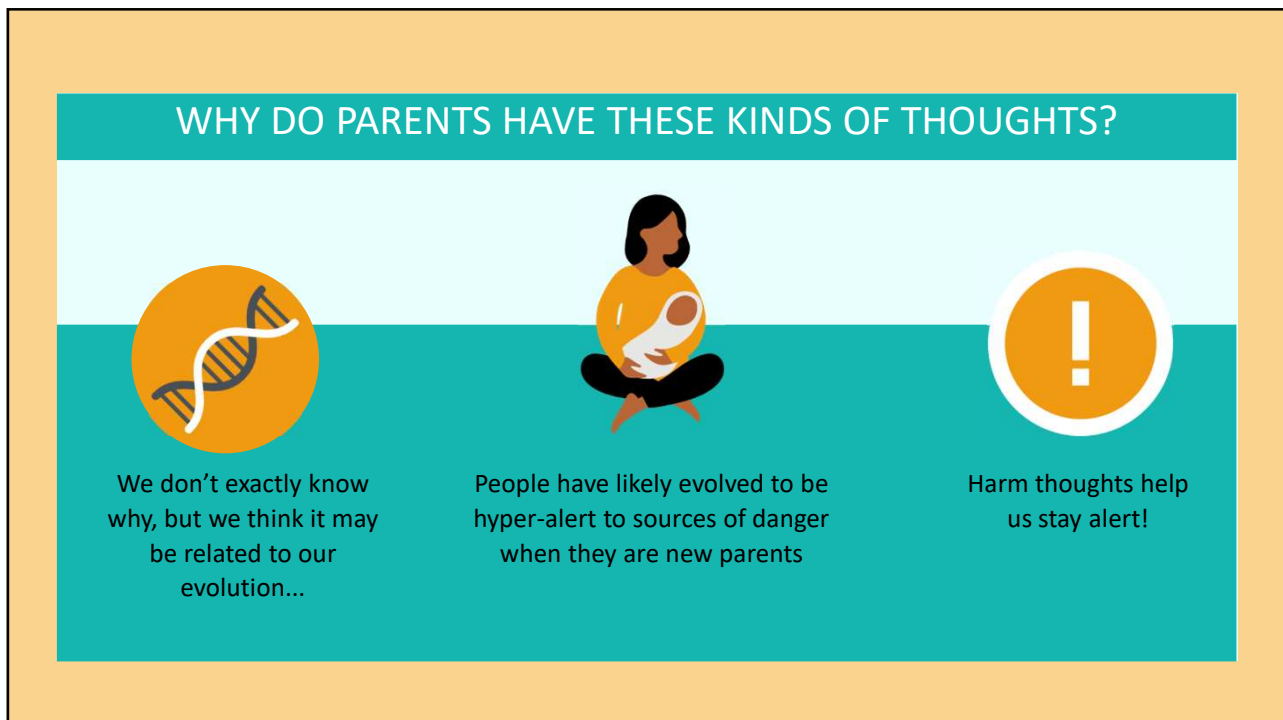
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DO DADS HAVE THESE THOUGHTS TOO?

Compared to moms, dads...





Experience these thoughts less often


Find them less upsetting

Can find them more difficult to talk about

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MOMS DON'T ACT ON THEIR UNWANTED, INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS, IMAGES OR IMPULSES..

There is no evidence that parents act on their UNWANTED, INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS, IMAGES or IMPULSES - *even violent ones!*



This mom has thoughts about hurting her baby on **PURPOSE**

The woman on the left is no more likely to harm her infant than the woman on the right!



This mom has thoughts about hurting her baby **BY ACCIDENT**

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ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT WORRIED I'LL HURT MY BABY?



I'm having unwanted, intrusive thoughts about hurting my baby

Nope!



I'm scared I might act on my unwanted, intrusive thoughts about my baby

Nope!



I have OCD and my obsessions are about harming my baby

Nope!

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IS IT NORMAL TO BE UPSET ABOUT THESE THOUGHTS?



Thoughts of harming your infant can be very upsetting and distressing



YES!



Unwanted, intrusive thoughts of hurting your baby on purpose tend to be the most upsetting

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SO, WHY DO SOME WOMEN HURT THEIR BABIES?

Even though it's **REALLY RARE**, some women do hurt their babies.



When a new mom hurts their baby, it's usually because they are struggling with serious mental health difficulties or are very isolated and unsupported.

If you are experiencing mental health difficulties, or are struggling in other ways (even if you think you are not at risk of harming your infant) it can be really helpful to talk to someone about what you're going through.

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IF YOU INTERPRET THE **FACT** THAT YOU ARE HAVING THESE THOUGHTS, OR THE **CONTENT** OF YOUR THOUGHTS TO MEAN....

I'M CRAZY

I'M A DANGER
TO MY BABY

I'M A BAD
PERSON

....and your unwanted intrusive thoughts are upsetting and keep coming back.


You may be suffering from **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**




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WHAT IS OCD?

OCD IS AN ANXIETY-RELATED DISORDER WITH 2 MAIN FEATURES



OBSSESSIONS
Recurrent, unwanted intrusive thoughts that are often upsetting



COMPULSIONS
Things you do over and over again to help you feel better about your obsessions

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OBSSESSIONS

IMAGE: Stepping on my baby

THOUGHT: What if I shove my baby

IMPULSE: To scream at my baby

COMPULSIONS

CHECKING: Checking if my baby is breathing

REASSURANCE SEEKING: Asking my partner if they think our baby is healthy

WASHING: Washing my baby's things over and over to make sure they're clean



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WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT PERINATAL OCD?



OCD appears most common during the postpartum period



OCD is more common during pregnancy and the postpartum



Obsessions in perinatal OCD often involve the infant



Obsessions of harm towards the infant are common

17%

of pregnant and postpartum women will experience perinatal OCD

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HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE OCD?



1

OBSSESSIONS and COMPULSIONS take over an hour a day



2

Your OCD symptoms are really upsetting to you



3

Your OCD is making it really difficult for you to manage your life

● OCD is making it difficult to manage ●



Your relationship



Caring for your baby




Your work



Your day to day tasks

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WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT MY OCD?



- ✓ Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is the most effective form of therapy for OCD
- ✓ There is now evidence that CBT is effective for perinatal OCD
- ✓ Often it is a psychologist who provides CBT
- ✓ CBT will focus on how you are interpreting your obsessions and what you are doing about them


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WILL I GET BETTER, OR WILL I ALWAYS HAVE THESE THOUGHTS?

For most new mothers, these thoughts go away over time.

Becoming a mother, especially for the first time, can be a **stressful experience** and it is normal for it to take some time to adapt.

Each mother adapts to their new caregiving role at different times but once you do, you will feel more settled being a mother and looking after your baby.



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RESOURCES

	<p>Maternal OCD</p> <p> maternalocd.org</p> <p> @maternalocd</p> <p> info@maternalocd.org</p>		<p>OCD Action</p> <p> https://ocdaction.org.uk</p> <p> @ocdaction</p> <p> info@ocdaction.org.uk</p> <p> Helpline: 0300 636 5478</p>
	<p>Anxiety Canada</p> <p> anxietycanada.com</p> <p> @Anxiety_Canada</p> <p> info@anxietycanada.com</p>		<p>Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia</p> <p> panda.org.au</p> <p> @PANDAaustralia</p> <p> info@panda.org.au</p> <p> Helpline: 1300 726 306</p>

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UBC PERINATAL ANXIETY LAB



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