**Becoming the Boss of Your Mood**

When you are feeling down or anxious, it’s really easy to let those negative feelings take over. One of the ways to balance out the negative feelings is to identify positive actions or activities that both distract you and can add some good energy and good “vibes” to your day.

**What Makes You Feel Good?**

When you are struggling it is not the time to try to remember what you like to do or what feels good to you. You have to have a “go to” list of possible activities that you can turn to quickly when needed. And it needs to be a list because no one activity will be the right one every time.

Below create an Activity List: (This is very personal. These are tools that work for you – they don’t have to work for anyone else.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

**Talking Back to Yourself**

When you are down or feeling anxious, you tend to engage in thought patterns that reinforce your negative feelings or make them even worse. These thought patterns often fall into several categories.

**Extreme Thinking**

“This is a completely horrible situation.”

“Other mothers are wonderful and completely happy.”

“I’m a terrible mother.”
I'm a failure as a partner.”

If I did this/that I would be truly happy/ a truly good person/my problems would be solved.”

Realistic Thinking:

“Even though my situation right now is very difficult, there are a few ways in which it is not so bad, maybe even pretty good.

“Some people are really good at looking happy/perfect when they may actually be struggling with how they feel.”

“No one is ever completely happy/a perfect person/solves all their problems.”

Over-generalizing and Catastrophic Thinking:

“This has been a horrible day so that means every day is going to be a disaster.”

“My partner has been so busy and preoccupied, this is the start of a serious decline in our relationship.”

“The baby has been crying so much today. He's probably crying because I am a bad mother and he already knows that.”

“I used to be organized and efficient. Now I can't even figure out how to fit in a shower let alone how I will ever be able to balance work and home life. It's clear I have become a brainless mess.”

Realistic Thinking

“I am the new parent of a newborn. I have to expect there are going to be a bunch of bad days until I figure out my baby and he/she moves through these first difficult months.”

“I am not the only one going through a tough adjustment period. So is my partner, and he/she may not feel comfortable revealing this to me.”

“Babies cry a lot. As long as I offer comfort, am available to my baby, and try to figure out what’s going on, I am being a very good mother and doing all that anyone could do in this situation.”

“There is so little chance that any new mother can find the physical and emotional energy to be organized and efficient; new babies just dominate your life. After a few months, I will gradually regain both my energy and my self-confidence; and what doesn’t seem possible now will be doable then.”

Self-Blaming:

A very common thought pattern for women who are dealing with PMD is to blame themselves for struggling emotionally. So, it's not bad enough that you are feeling not
at all like yourself and that your mood is pretty low, you end up blaming yourself for feeling that way as well!

Your mantra needs to be:

“This is not my fault.”

“I am working on getting on top of this and I WILL with help from my support system and the professionals I have found that understand PPD.”

“15 to 20% of new mothers develop a perinatal mood disorder. No woman wants one and everyone wants to get better. If you are reading this, it means you are starting to get the help that will make a big improvement in how you feel.”

**Expecting the Worst:**

When things in your life are difficult, it’s easy to extend negative thinking to the future as well as the present and end up thinking:

“Things are bad now and they will always be that way.”

Instead of:

“How I feel now does not mean that I will feel this way in the future. I just have to have some patience and hope, work toward making things better, and accept the help that good people are offering me. Positive change can occur in my life.”

**Your Relationships and Your Mood:**

It will probably not surprise you to learn that when people are in bad moods, they tend to either avoid other people or, when they are with others, family or friends, their moodiness leads them to be prickly or difficult to get along with. When we feel unhappy, depressed, anxious – we are understandably not more sociable and pleasant. And the reverse tends to be true as well; when we feel good about ourselves and the world around us, we are more likely to be interested in being with others and are easier to get along with.

Additionally, each situation tends to reinforce and intensify itself:

**Being Unhappy, Depressed, Anxious → Poor Quality of Relationships → Being MORE Unhappy**

**Being Socially Positive and Pleasant → Good Quality of relationships → Improved Mood**

Obviously, the second set of actions and feelings and more likely to help you deal with PPD than the first.

So what do you do when you have negative feelings that lead you to want to avoid engaging with others or have trouble being pleasant when you do, BUT you want to feel more positive and enjoy better relationships?
Well, if you know that being pleasant and positive in your casual and important relationships will actually lead you to feel better about yourself and your life, then it is worth the effort to:

Identify the person or people in your life whom you are most comfortable reaching out to, even though you may not be feeling very social or sociable at the moment – the people who know you best and can be most accepting of you as you are right now.

Sometimes being very honest can win the day: “I’ve been struggling lately with some tough feelings, but I think I could feel a lot better spending some time hanging out together because you are such a positive person in my life.”

Maybe it’s worth giving it a try.