

# Emotional Wellbeing In The Workplace



Like any health condition, perinatal depression and anxiety (PNDA) can affect a person's ability to function at work.

**Perinatal depression and anxiety can have a significant impact on all aspects of a person's life. At work they may be unable to concentrate, make decisions or get things done. They may feel out of control, extremely tired and stressed.**

If not identified and treated, perinatal depression and anxiety can prove costly for employers as it can result in higher rates of absenteeism, reduced productivity and lower return to work rates. A report by Deloitte (2012) found that the majority of economic costs attributable to perinatal depression result from lost productivity in the workplace and estimated these costs to be \$310 million in 2012 for Australian businesses.<sup>1</sup>

The good news is that organisations can take action! PwC research in 2014 shows a \$2.30 average return on investment for every \$1 invested in creating a mentally healthy workplace.<sup>2</sup> Promoting good mental health in the workplace benefits everyone, executives, managers, employees and business owners. A well implemented plan can improve staff morale and engagement, lower staff turnover, ensure legal and ethical obligations are met, improve productivity and enhance business reputation.

There are both social and economic advantages in creating a workplace where good mental health is valued. Many working parents struggle with issues around childcare and flexibility. This is compounded during pregnancy and in the first year after birth and affects both fathers and mothers. Adjusting to life as a new family can be challenging, and parents benefit from support.

## EMOTIONAL WELLBEING WORKPLACE SESSIONS

**Gidget Foundation Australia** can support employers to promote mental wellbeing in the workplace. Staff feel valued when they feel supported. Managers gain insights and tools to help them feel more confident to support vulnerable staff. Workplaces will increase their social return on investment and that has a positive impact on the bottom line.

The Gidget Foundation can support individual workplace needs by:

- Working collaboratively to create bespoke programs, workshops or seminars
- Providing priority support for staff experiencing PNDA either via its **Gidget House** or **Start Talking** programs
- Providing interesting and informative speakers

As programs and support are tailored to suit the needs of the organisation, associated costs are quoted as part of the briefing process. To find out more, email [workplace@gidgetfoundation.org.au](mailto:workplace@gidgetfoundation.org.au)

### References:

1. Deloitte Access Economics – The cost of perinatal depression in Australia (October 2012)
2. PwC PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia – Creating a mentally healthy workplace: Return on investment analysis (March 2014)



### WHAT IS PERINATAL DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY?

Depression and anxiety during pregnancy and the first year of parenting (the perinatal period) affects around 20% of mothers and 10% of fathers. Previously known simply as Postnatal Depression, we now recognise that depression and anxiety can have an impact during pregnancy as well as after birth. Treating anxiety can minimise the risk of depression developing.

These are recognised, diagnosable and recoverable medical conditions; the result of biological, psychological and social factors. Left untreated, the impact on the mother, father, child and other family members can be profound.

Perinatal depression and anxiety should not be confused with the 'baby blues' that occur 3 to 5 days after giving birth. These feelings of tearfulness and anxiety affect around 80% of mothers, are transient, and will dissipate.

### What should you be looking out for?

Risk factors for perinatal depression and anxiety can include:

- Lack of support or understanding from partner
- Lack of emotional and practical support from family and friends
- Stress related to finances, work or moving house
- Other emotional stress or trauma (e.g. unplanned pregnancy, reproductive issues, difficult birth, miscarriage or stillbirth)
- Recent or otherwise significant bereavement

- A perfectionist, self-critical personality
- Age less than 18 years or over 35 years
- Previous mental health problems (e.g. depression, bullying in adolescence, or family)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- Culturally and linguistically diverse situation
- Rural and remote location

### Symptoms can include:

- Inability to enjoy activities previously enjoyed
- Unable to concentrate or focus, make decisions or get things done
- Feeling extremely alert, 'on edge', or irritable
- Physical symptoms such as heart palpitations, constant headaches, sweaty hands, loss of appetite
- Feeling numb, hopeless and remote from family and friends
- Feeling out of control
- Unable to rest, even when baby is sleeping, and tired on awakening
- Nightmares and /or flashbacks of difficult birth events
- Avoiding situations that remind you of the birth
- Thoughts of harm befalling yourself, baby or partner
- Feelings of guilt, shame, or repetitive thoughts
- Feeling trapped or in a dark hole or tunnel with no escape
- Feelings of grief, loss anger, tearfulness
- Feeling lethargic or hyperactive



Gidget Foundation Australia is a not for profit organisation that provides programs to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents.

The Gidget Foundation was named after a vibrant and joyful mother, who suffered from unrecognised postnatal depression. Her nickname was 'Gidget'. The Foundation evokes Gidget's warmth and lively spirit. Established by her friends and sisters, the organisation has grown and is now supported by passionate individuals, community leaders, health professionals, businesses and government.

Gidget Foundation Australia is proud to work in conjunction with Parents At Work to deliver its Emotional Wellbeing Workplace Sessions. Parents At Work is a global coaching and education provider of working parent programs including preparing for parental leave and returning to work transition programs.