Coping with uncertainty when you’re pregnant or have a new baby

The unexpected often happens in life. It’s normal to feel unsure how to adjust.

When you’re pregnant or caring for a baby (perinatal period), stressful situations may affect your mental health and wellbeing. We’re living in times of intense change and uncertainty. Public health emergencies, global conflict situations and natural disasters can feel incredibly overwhelming.

Finding ways to cope with life’s challenges is a major part of the parenthood journey.

Self-care

Regardless of your coping style, if you’re also dealing with major disruptions to your life, plans and hopes for the future, please be kind and gentle with yourself.

Coping styles

Research suggests that people use 3 main coping styles when dealing with the demands, distress and uncertainty of life events beyond their control. You can try these at home or in a calm environment.

**Emotion-focused** coping strategies may reduce distress and increase wellbeing when faced with events out of your control.

*Try:* Connecting with others.

**Problem-focused** coping may be useful when you’re tackling situations that are controllable, and the outcomes of your actions are more predictable.

*Try:* Following a simple daily routine.

**Avoidant coping** may help you gradually adjust to changing situations and events.

*Try:* Social media breaks.

Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia
National Helpline 1300 726 306 | panda.org.au
Reflection and acceptance

Reflecting on your experience and adjusting to what's happening are emotion-focused coping skills.

1. Think about what's distressing you and your responses to the situation (feelings, thoughts, and behaviour). Does your assessment of the situation and response feel helpful? How are you coping/not coping?

2. Reflect on what you can change. Think about what kind of support you might need to accept that some things are beyond your control.

3. Can you identify any 'silver linings' or benefits to the situation which you hadn't considered? Help from unexpected sources, closer relationships?

A combination of coping strategies may help you adjust to unexpected situations in life. More coping strategies and information can be found on our website.

PANDA Helpline

- **The PANDA Helpline** provides counselling, referrals, and peer support from parents who have been through similar challenges. When you call, you will speak with a counsellor who understands the challenges of being an expecting or new parent. They will listen with kindness and compassion and together you will work out a way forward. Helpline staff can also provide access to appropriate specialist services.

- **If you are concerned for your own safety or that of someone else**, it's vital that you seek immediate help by contacting a GP or your nearest hospital's emergency department. You can also contact PANDA for advice and support. If you believe that someone's life is at immediate risk, then call 000.

Parents often discover just how strong, brave and resilient they truly are when faced with life's big unknowns.