

Matrescence



Session aims

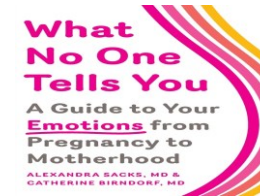
- To raise/improve awareness of the transition into motherhood
- To identify a self-help technique for addressing stress and negative thinking



Much of the content of this workshop comes from the opinions, ideas and works of 2 experts in their field:

- **Alexandra Sacks MD:** An American psychiatrist in the reproductive field, and co-author of the best-selling book

What No One Tells You

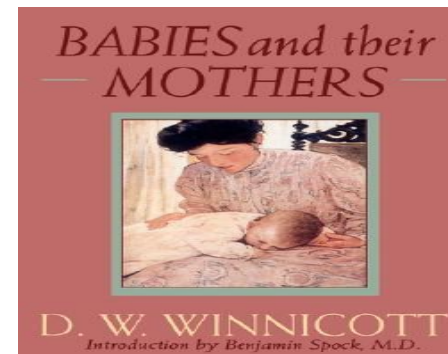


- PODCASTS: Alexandra Sacks Motherhood sessions
(<https://gimletmedia.com/shows/motherhood-sessions>)
- TED Talk: 'A new way to think about the transition to motherhood'



And.....

- **Donald Winnicott** (1896—1971): A British pediatrician and psychoanalyst who was especially influential in the field of object relations theory and developmental psychology.



Matrescence: What is it?

According to the Cambridge English dictionary, matrescence refers to:

- The process of becoming a mother
- The physical, psychological and emotional changes you go through after the birth of your child



Adolescence!!

WHY ARE
TEENS so
MOODY?



Adolescence

Adolescence is the period following the stage of puberty during which a young person develops from a child into an adult.

This period comes with **social** and **emotional** changes.



Adolescence

Social changes:

- Searching for identity: Young people are busy working out who they are and where they fit in the world
- This search can be influenced by peer group, cultural background, the media, and family expectations



Adolescence

Emotional changes:

- They may have strong feelings and intense emotions at different times; moods might seem unpredictable
- These emotional ups and downs can lead to conflict, internally and externally
- They can feel out of control regarding differences in their body changes and appearance



Dr Sacks describes 4 key parts to the period of matrescence:

1. Changes in family dynamics

- When two become three, the parental couple will no longer exist in the way it did previously, and this can take a lot of working through
- Roles will need to be worked out again, and disagreements can arise as your ideas of parenting become a reality



Dr Sacks describes 4 key components of the period of matrescence:

2. Maternal ambivalence (mixed feelings)

- Sacks refers to this as the 'push and pull' many mothers experience as they try to balance the often-competing demands of being a mother and a partner
- This ambivalence is a very normal part of being a mother, yet one which often leads to maternal guilt and shame



Dr Sacks describes 4 key components of the period of matrescence:

3. Fantasy vs. reality

- Ideas about motherhood/parenthood develop both pre- and post-natally, and are often based on our own experiences during childhood
- These ideas often differ between mother and father, too
- Sometimes, when the fantasy or the image of the baby/motherhood differs from the reality of what is presented, this can lead to feelings of inadequacy and/or helplessness



Dr Sacks describes 4 key components of the period of matrescence:

4. Guilt and shame

- When we set ourselves up to achieve unrealistic standards, or seek to become “the perfect mother”, we are often setting ourselves up for disappointment
- Women are frequently presented with images in the media which portray the perfect vision of motherhood – when we do not match up with this unobtainable image, it can lead to feelings of guilt and shame





“You have to first acknowledge the feelings of loss when you let go of one way of living to begin another...”

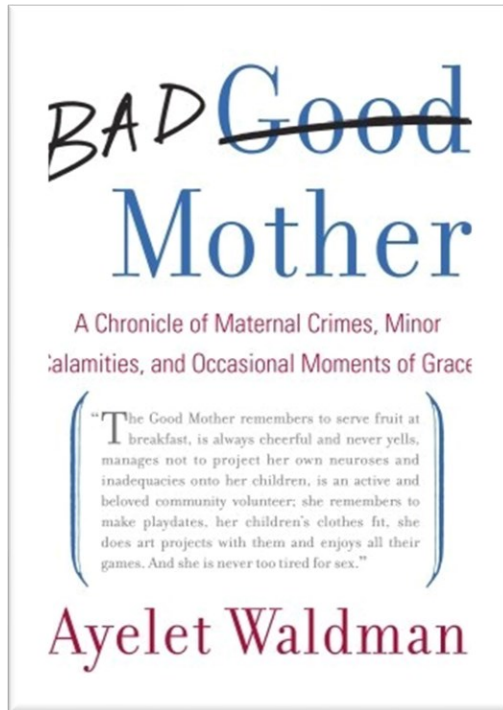
– Alexandra Sacks

“The moment a child is born, the mother is also born. She never existed before. The woman existed, but the mother, never. A mother is something absolutely new.”

– Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh



Good Mother/Bad Mother



“The Good Mother remembers to serve fruit at breakfast, is always cheerful and never yells, manages not to project her own neuroses and inadequacies onto her children, is an active and beloved community volunteer: she remembers to make playdates, her children’s clothes fit, she does art projects with them and enjoys all their games. And she is never too tired for sex.”





The Good Enough Mother

- This well-known phrase was created by Donald Winnicott in 1953
- His theory came mainly through observation of the mother and child



The following came from Winnicott's observation:

- The process of becoming a good enough mother to our children happens over time
- With babies, we try to be available constantly and respond to them immediately.

This is important because it teaches our children that they are safe and will be cared for

- The thing is, we can't keep up this level of attentiveness to our children forever, nor should we.

That is Winnicott's point! He believed that the way to be a good mother is to be a good enough mother. Children need their mother (or primary caretaker) to fail them in manageable ways on a regular basis so they can learn to live in an imperfect world.



Interpersonal therapy

In psychology, a life change that causes an intense shift in your identity and interpersonal relationship is called a “role transition”.

These taxing transitions are high-stress times that, if ignored, can trigger depression and other kinds of psychological tension.



Interpersonal therapy

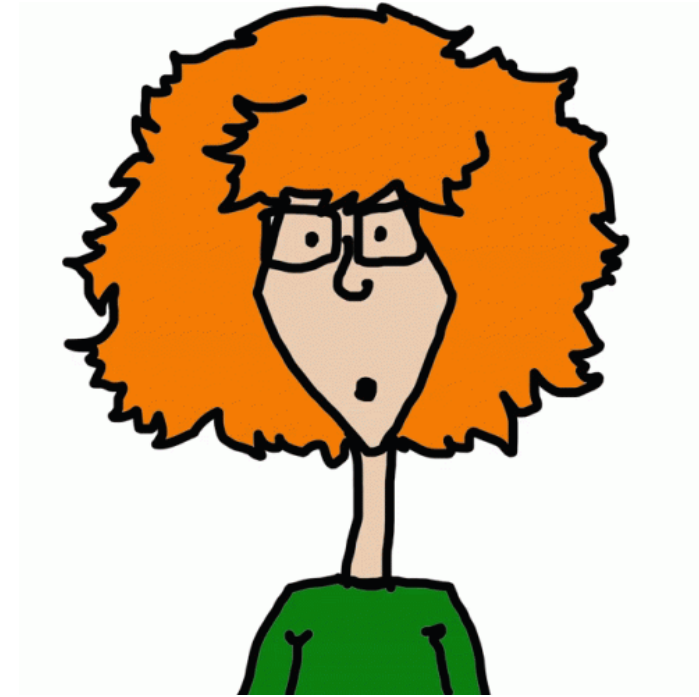
This, as well as shifting hormones, may explain why the third trimester (28—40 weeks) is a common time for psychological problems to begin.

It's good to remind yourself that no matter how much you wanted and planned for motherhood, all this identity shifting may leave you feeling out of control and disoriented at times.



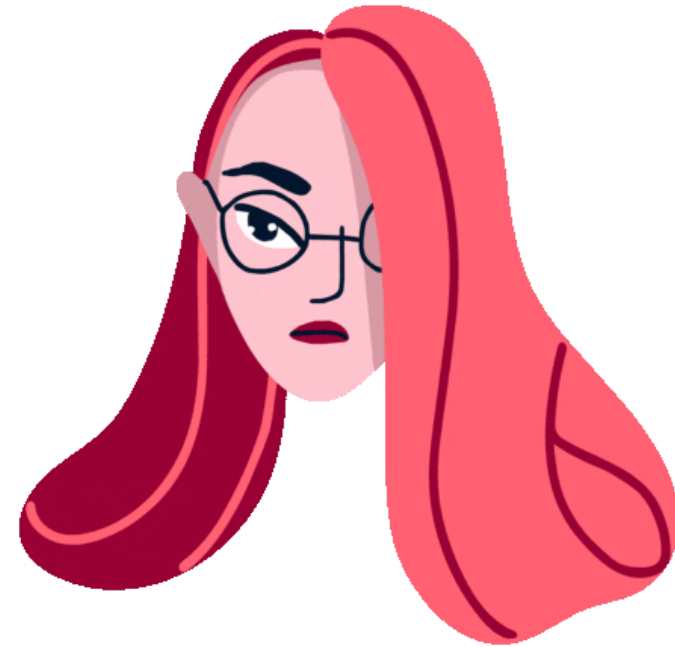
DIY interpersonal therapy involves 4 steps:

1. Name what's upsetting you



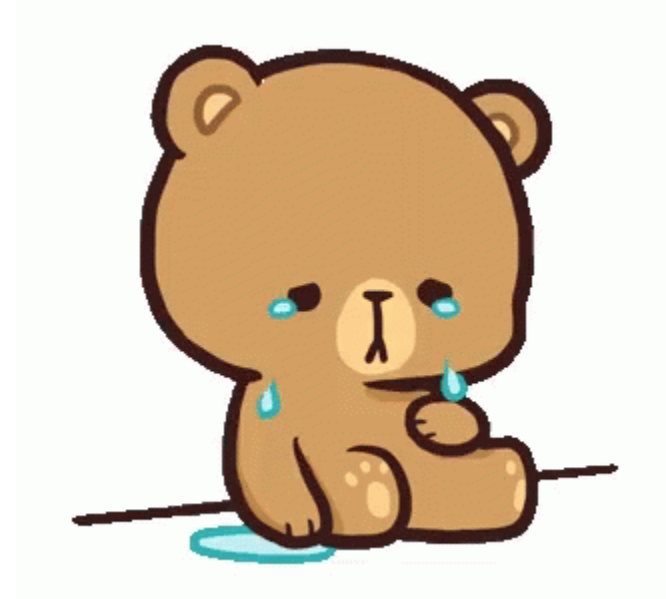
DIY interpersonal therapy involves 4 steps:

1. Name what's upsetting you
2. Be clear about the identity change



DIY interpersonal therapy involves 4 steps:

1. Name what's upsetting you
2. Be clear about the identity change
3. Acknowledge your distress and take the time to accept your feelings



DIY interpersonal therapy involves 4 steps:

1. Name what's upsetting you
2. Be clear about the identity change
3. Acknowledge your distress and take the time to accept your feelings
4. Come up with a plan for how to adapt to your new circumstances



Dr Sack says:
Therapy does not work by having big ideas.
It just takes time to live through change.....

Living through & feeling it out.



If that doesn't help, take a
deep breath in...



