Psychological Adjustment During Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a time of transition. You may notice extreme reactions, rapidly changing moods, your emotional reactions and perceptions of the world and others may change. You may be more sensitive and vulnerable, feeling a loss of control. There are many psychological shifts you may notice as you progress through your pregnancy.

The First Trimester

The first trimester is a time of adjusting to the fact that you are pregnant and accepting this reality. Most women are upset or ambivalent about being pregnant, 80% of women go through a period of feeling disappointment, rejection, anxiety, depression and unhappiness about their pregnancy, including women who planned for or struggled to become pregnant. This is normal and often passes. At the same time some women are overjoyed and can hardly believe they are pregnant. They can hardly wait for the end of the first trimester so they can relax and believe in their pregnancy. During the first trimester the woman’s focus is on herself and effect this pregnancy will have on her life.

The Second Trimester

Often women are feeling much better in the second trimester as the fatigue, nausea, depression, worries and anxieties dissipate. The psychological task in the second trimester is often developing your own identity as a mother, distinct from your own mother. You may reevaluate the aspects of your relationship with your mother, accepting what you value and respect and rejecting negative or unwanted qualities. This is normal. You may also begin to increase your social contact with other new mothers and change your activities and interests as you prepare for motherhood. Sometimes this social shift involves some grief work as you let go of some former relationships that will not evolve with you. As you feel your baby move the shift from focus on self changes to focusing on your baby.

The Third Trimester

This is a time of watchful waiting, most women begin to become impatient waiting for the arrival of their baby. It is a time active preparation for childbirth and parenthood. Fears tend to surface—will everyone be healthy and safe, will I know when labor begins? You may feel a sense of grief as you anticipate loss of attention and separation of baby from your own body. Slight depression is not uncommon, you may feel more vulnerable and dependent on others.