Parenting for Women in Recovery from Substance Use Disorders

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It is important to remember that...

1. Most women in recovery from SUDs care about their children and want to be good mothers
2. Caregiving varies widely even for women with SUDs
3. Yet, mothers with substance use histories are at greater risk of losing custody of their children (Grant, et al., 2011)
4. Evidence has shown that as a group mothers with SUDs can be less sensitive and responsive to their children and move between intrusiveness and passivity (Hans, Bernstein & Henson, 1999)
Heightened public concerns about newborns exposed to opiates and substances > shame/guilt > challenges to treatment engagement

USA TODAY
Drug-dependent babies challenge doctors, politicians

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- No one who hears it ever forgets the sound. When newborn babies begin to withdraw from powerful drugs, they shriek at a high, telltale pitch. Cut off from the substances they ingested through their mothers, they convulse, projectile vomit or writhe from skin-scorching diarrhea.

Their tiny bodies shudder violently. They cannot be consoled.

Cases soar of newborns with opiate addiction

Withdrawal agony for hundreds

MARSHFIELD— Mya Barry was born in April 2011 with opiates already coursing through her tiny veins. But it was not the heroin passed to her in utero by her drug-addicted mother that killed the infant, prosecutors say.

JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF
Challenges to Treatment Engagement

Model of Secrecy and Disclosure by Pregnant Women Misusing Substances

Paris, et al., 2015
Impact of drugs on the brain: Relevance for parenting

**Substances can “hijack” the brain, diminishing the rewards of parenting**
What About the Babies?

Children exposed in utero may have different abilities to explore, signal distress, experience regulation, or appreciate physical discomfort.

“The substance-exposed mother and child are difficult regulatory partners for each other, as the exposed infant often has an impaired ability to regulate his states ... and needs more parental help. At the same time, the mother usually has a reduced capacity to read the child’s signals. This combination easily leads to a viciously negative cycle that culminates in withdrawal from interaction and increased risk for child neglect and abuse.” (Pajulo et al., 2006)
How Do We Approach Parenting Interventions?

1) Typical parenting programs were not developed for parents with SUDs and don’t address their particular needs

2) Psychoeducational interventions for parents with SUDs have shown minimal effectiveness on improving parenting and parent-child relationships (Suchman, et al., 2006)

3) Parenting interventions must address particular challenges of mothers with SUDs including the stress-reward system, the process of recovery, and managing challenging emotions while parenting (Suchman, et al., 2017)
1) **Mothering from the Inside Out (MIO):** Individual parenting intervention focused on the mentalizing process or reflective functioning rather than teaching particular content; offered in conjunction with substance use treatment (Suchman, et al., 2013)

2) **BRIGHT: (Building Resilience Through Intervention: Growing Healthier Together):** Dyadic parent-child intervention informed by Child-Parent Psychotherapy with additional focus on reflective functioning and emotion regulation; enhancement to SUD treatment- residential, MAT and outpatient (Paris, et al., 2015)

3) **NESST (Newborns Exposed to Substances: Support and Therapy):** Home-based intervention supporting parenting and recovery; clinician and/or peer mentor (Spielman, et al., 2015)
For Additional Information & Questions

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6. Parental substance use and the child welfare system  
   [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/parentalsubabuse.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/parentalsubabuse.pdf)

7. Sober mommies: [https://sobermommies.com](https://sobermommies.com)

8. Webinar: Prenatal Exposure to Substances and Trauma: Fostering Parent and Child Well-being  

9. Webinar: Understanding and Treating Caregiver Substance Abuse and Trauma: A Focus on the Family  
Thank you!