



# An Introduction to the MotherWoman Perinatal Support Group Facilitator Training

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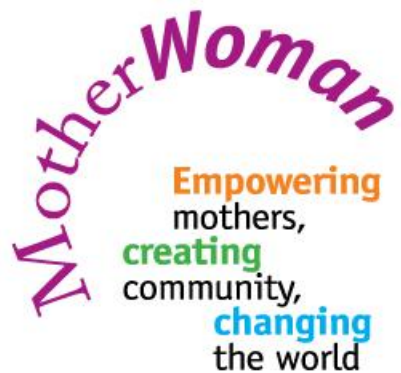
**Annette Cycon, LICSW  
Founder and Director of Training**

**Liz Friedman, MFA  
Program Director  
Founder, Perinatal Support Initiative**



## Our Objectives:

1. Introduce the MotherWoman Perinatal Support Group Model and Facilitator Training
2. Provide framework for understanding Perinatal Emotional Complications within a socio-political context
3. Inspire towards goal of 1 Support Group for every 2000 births




## Support Groups Are:

- Effective as treatment for perinatal emotional complications
- Enhance other treatment modalities (medication, talk therapy, etc.)
- Cost-effective
- Increase mental health resources
- Foundation of comprehensive safety net for mothers





## MotherWoman's Goal



**1 Perinatal  
Support Group  
for every 2,000  
births nationally**

**2,100 Perinatal  
Support Groups**

- U.S. births: 4,300,000
- Rate of PPD: 10-20%
- Women with PPD: 430,000 - 860,000



## Long-term Success of Community Perinatal Support Groups Depends On:

### Perinatal Support Network

- Resource and Referral Process
- Institutional Support
- Professional Training
- Unified Goals

### Established Support Group

- Well-trained PSG Facilitators
- Consistent format
- Curriculum



## MW PSG Development

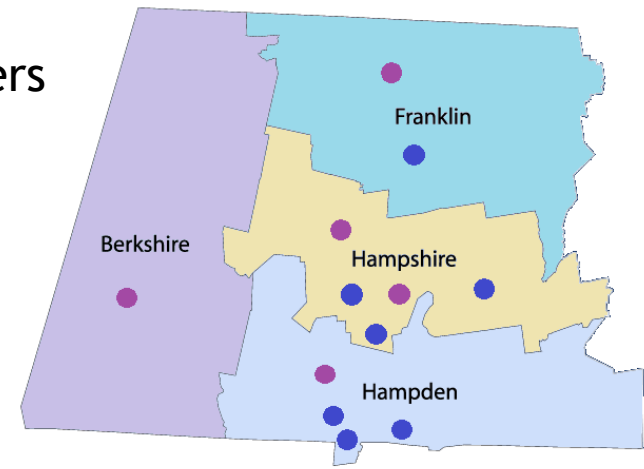


## Result:

### 12 MotherWoman Perinatal Support Groups

5 general and 7 supporting diverse communities

- Teens
- Latinas
- Women of color
- Pregnancy and infant loss
- Somali refugees
- Incarcerated mothers
- and fathers!





## How we understand Perinatal Emotional Spectrum:

Medical/Psychiatric Model

Trauma Theory *(Beck, Herman)*

Community Mental Health Theory  
*(Blackman & Goldstein)*

Social Justice Theory *(Albee)*

## Evidence-based Models:

### Therapeutic Models

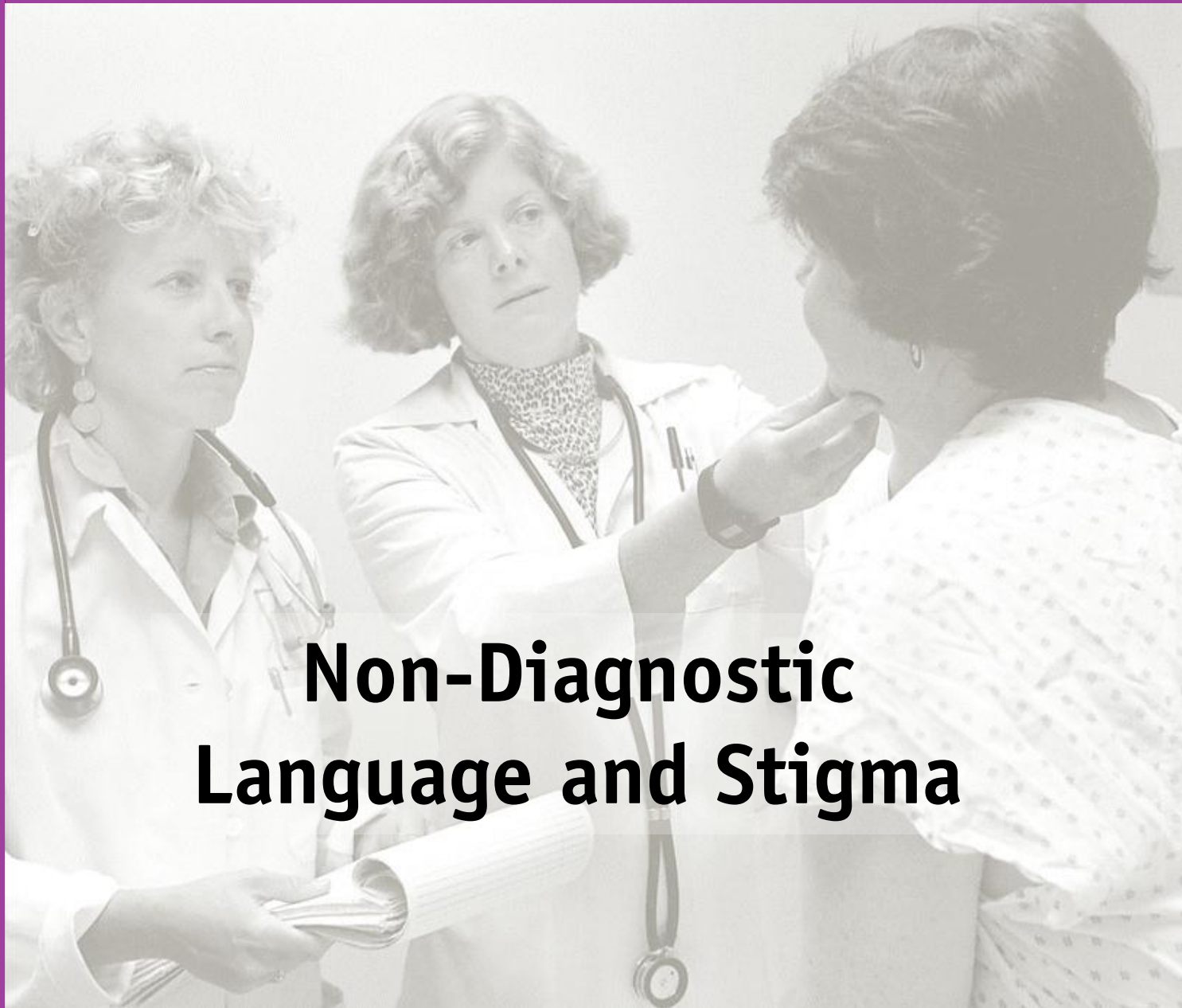
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)
- Re-evaluation Counseling (RC)

### Recovery Model

### Healing Circle Model

### Feminist Leadership Model

### Psycho-Social Educational Model



# Non-Diagnostic Language and Stigma



## Women don't seek treatment because they are afraid of:



- Stigma, shame and guilt
- Being labeled with a mental illness
- Misinformation linking PPD with PP psychosis
- Losing their children



**“MotherWoman’s use of non-diagnostic language is an intervention in itself.**

**As a psychiatrist, I am now re-thinking my use of language.”**

*- Dr. Nancy Byatt, UMass Medical Center, Worcester*





## MotherWoman Definitions:

PES

Perinatal Emotional Spectrum

PEC

Perinatal Emotional Complications

PECr

Perinatal Emotional Crisis



## Elements of a Successful PSG:

- High and consistent membership
- Accessible
- Multi-source referrals
- Support by host agency
- Diversity: members, facilitators, communities
- Culturally competent
- Clear objectives and curriculum





## Outcomes for Moms:

- Recover emotional competence and stability
- Understand Perinatal Emotional Spectrum
- Empowered to take on the demands of their lives
- Seek out additional resources
- Reduce isolation and develop community
- Moms in crisis are identified and referred
- Prevent child abuse and neglect
- Support mother - infant relationship





## Outcomes for Communities:

- Reliable resource for professional referral
- Effective and affordable treatment
- Enhances all other treatments
- Provides additional mental health services
- Public education and prevention





## Fundamental Components of MotherWoman Support Group Model<sup>©</sup>:

- Facilitator training and education
- Co-facilitation
- De-stigmatizing language
- Replicable format
- PES and psycho-social education curriculum
- Inclusive leadership
- Cultural competence and diversity training
- Intentional outreach to diverse facilitators



# Objectives of MotherWoman Perinatal Support Group

**S**afety

**E**ducation

**E**mpowerment

## SAFETY

- To speak their truth
- To say what is taboo
- To listen and to be listened to with respect  
and non-judgment
- To have an advice-free zone
- To support all parenting styles
- To challenge cultural myths of motherhood
- To embrace diverse mothers

## EDUCATION

- Perinatal Emotional Spectrum
- Effective treatments and resources
- Relaxation techniques
- Mother-infant attachment
- Relationship and communication skills
- Socio-political context of motherhood and impact on Perinatal Emotional Complications
- Crisis and emergency strategies

## EMPOWERMENT

Building internal resources to enhance a woman's ability to effect positive change in her life.

- Inherent belief in every woman
- Prioritize mother's self-care
- Respect each woman's choices -- trust that each woman knows what is right for her
- Provide local, culturally appropriate resources for further care and treatment



## MotherWoman Facilitator Training:

1. MW Support Group Format & Curriculum
2. Group Dynamics
3. Perinatal Emotional Spectrum & Psycho-social Education
4. Cultural Competence
5. Socio-Political Context of Motherhood

## Support Group Format & Curriculum

Consistent group format reinforces:

**S**afety

**E**ducation

**E**mpowerment



**“I’ve been running the Empty Arms group for over three years, and felt as if I was very skilled as a facilitator going into the MotherWoman training. But the methods I learned through MotherWoman have transformed my group beyond anything I could have expected.”**

*Carol McMurrich, Founder and Facilitator of Empty Arms  
(support group for parents who have experienced pregnancy or infant loss)*







## MotherWoman Principles

**We acknowledge the challenges and intense feelings in the perinatal period which can frighten us and make us question our ability to meet the demands of motherhood.**

**This can be the hardest time in a woman's life. We may question our own sanity and our ability to be our child's mother.**



## MW Principles

We have confidence that every woman has the wisdom within to navigate her life when she feels heard, validated and honored for who she is, as she is.



## MW Principles

**We believe that speaking the truth about mothering is a revolutionary act.**

**Saying the truth about our own experience of motherhood decreases our isolation and self-blame.**

**We know that each of us can heal and find our own path as mothers and women.**

## Group Dynamics

- Over/under sharing
- Unsolicited advice giving
- Disruptive behavior
- Woman in crisis
- Challenging the facilitator
- Lack of common experience



# Perinatal Emotional Spectrum & Psycho-social Education:

## Clinical understanding of PES

- Baby blues, PPD, PPA, OCD, PTSD, psychosis
- Symptoms, Risk factors, Treatment
- Mother- Infant bonding

## Psycho-social adjustment

- Identity
- Relationships and Work/Life balance
- Emergency protocols



## Cultural Competence with Diverse Mothers

It is essential that facilitators:

- a. Assume there is difference in the room
- b. Outreach to diverse mothers in community
- c. Be inclusive of ethnic, racial, economic differences
- d. Create bridging conversations
- e. Name oppression and mothers' real experiences
- f. Be willing to make mistakes, apologize and keep learning



**“As a Latina woman, having a facilitator who has experienced similar things allows for the healing process, because we are walking in the same pair of shoes.”**



*Aida Ruiz-Batiste, Case Manager, Centro de Salud,  
Brightwood Health Center, Springfield, MA  
MotherWoman Trained Facilitator*

## Cultural themes





# Introduction to Perinatal Support Group Facilitator Training





**“We believe that in the same way that media imagery about a woman’s beauty contributes to eating disorders, media imagery about motherhood contributes to perinatal emotional complications.”**

- *Annette Cycon, MotherWoman Founder*

## Socio-Political Context of Motherhood:



**Social  
Policies**



**Oppression**



“Unfortunately mothers have a tendency to blame themselves for their inability to manage an insensitive social system that does not support them, rather than placing blame where it belongs - on the system itself.”

*Sharon Lerner, Author  
The War on Moms*



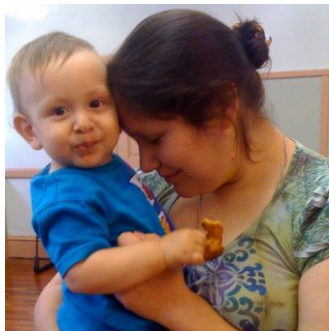


## Why do we discuss Socio-Political context?

- Relieves self-blame
- Adds perspective
- Supports adjustment
- Ends isolation
- Normalizes experience
- Empowers mothers

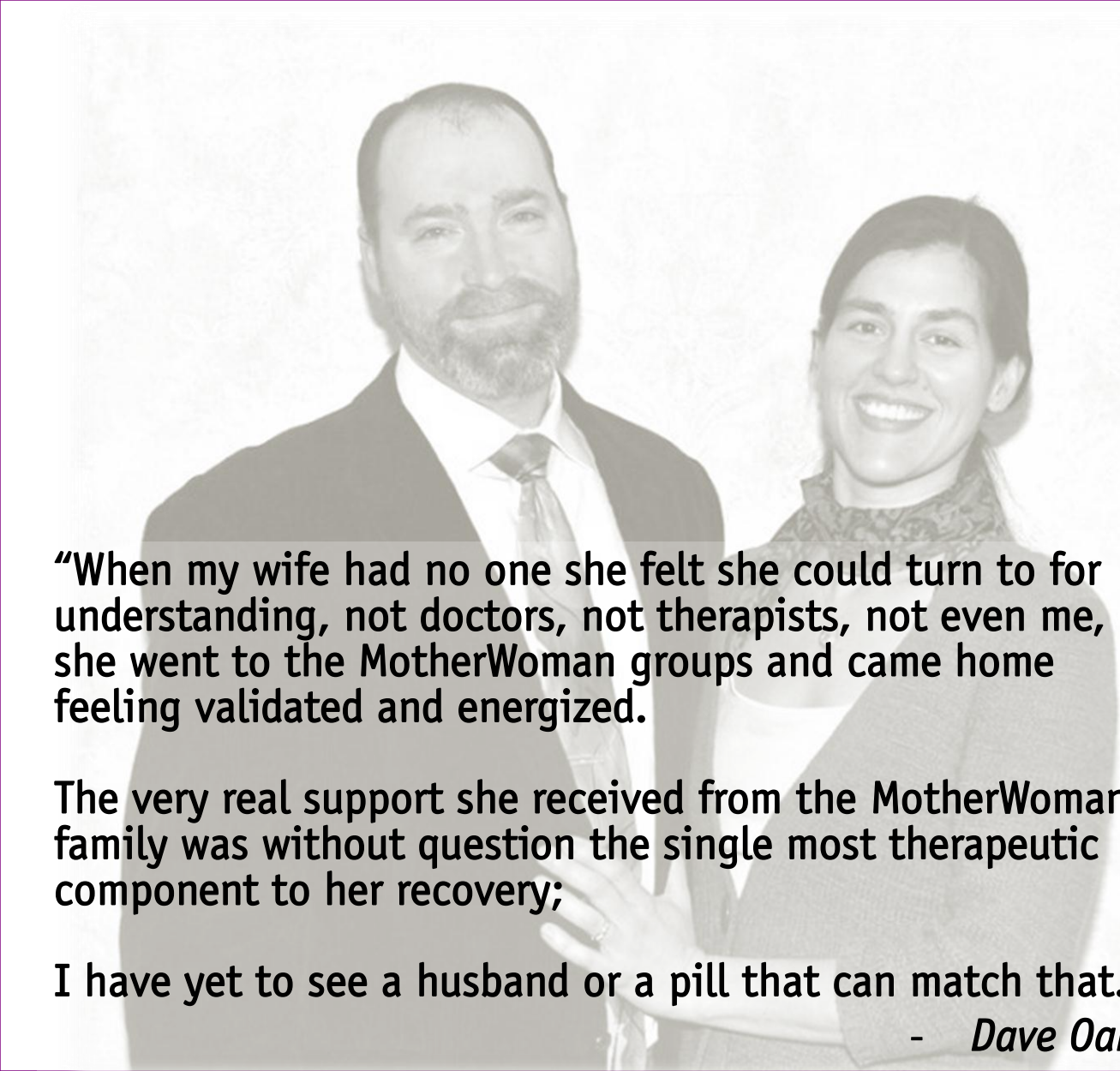


**“The MotherWoman Support Group was my life line. I don’t want to think about what would have happened if this group wasn’t here for me and my son.”**



*Ryn Mann, group member*

**Perinatal Support Groups become essential support for mothers**



**“When my wife had no one she felt she could turn to for understanding, not doctors, not therapists, not even me, she went to the MotherWoman groups and came home feeling validated and energized.**

**The very real support she received from the MotherWoman family was without question the single most therapeutic component to her recovery;**

**I have yet to see a husband or a pill that can match that.”**

**- Dave Oakes**



Join us in meeting our goal:  
**1 SUPPORT GROUP FOR EVERY 2000 MOTHERS !**

**Upcoming Facilitator Training:**

**Nov. 30 - Dec. 3, Hartford / Springfield**

**2012 Trainings**

New Jersey

Boston

Hartford/Springfield

**MOTHERWOMAN.ORG**

for additional dates and information

**VISIT OUR POSTER SESSION TONIGHT  
5:30-6:30 PM**