



How to read signs that past experiences are affecting a loved one

Both males and females can feel anxiety or stress coming up for them during pregnancy and after the arrival of the baby. Some people have depression symptoms starting to emerge at this time (e.g. feeling down or sad most of the time, have feelings of helplessness or hopelessness). These feelings can relate to many things, for example, hormonal changes, fatigue, worries about the relationship, coping as a parent, being a good parent, about being a good partner, about money, not feeling the way you feel you should about being a parent, or having memories from your own childhood or other difficult times popping into your mind continually.

Some people who have experienced trauma or abuse in their past, find these experiences affect them more strongly at this time (e.g. past childhood abuse which may have involved physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect, including exposure to parental family violence). Trauma experienced as an adult may also be present for you at this time. Some people find the experience of child birth to be traumatic, whether there are complications or not.

When trauma is involved it becomes really important to look after yourself as you now have a small human relying on you for everything. Getting yourself in a better headspace is the priority for the wellbeing of your child. Signs that a past or current trauma could be affecting your ability to parent could include the following;

- » Feeling like everything is overwhelming
- » Finding it difficult to hold it together
- » Strong reactions tied to the event affecting you on a daily basis
- » Continual nightmares
- » Withdrawing from activities you usually like to do
- » Isolating yourself from friends and family
- » Feeling angry, anxious, sad, overwhelmed more often than not
- » Changes to your health, eating less, sleeping less, headaches, etc.
- » Not being able to care for your baby or offer the support it needs

It is important that you talk with your GP if you have any of these signs, or if you feel you need support. Or get your partner to see a GP. Recovery after a traumatic event is different for everyone, so it's important to get help if you need it. The earlier you seek help, the faster you're likely to recover.