



How could I benefit from therapy?

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At PND Wellington we are seeing increasing demand for our new free/lowcost counselling service. Life happens, so when things get tough it's good to have a counsellor up your sleeve and ready to go.

Counselling provides the space and place to get things off your chest (without the repercussions of others finding out what you've said), to problem solve, to cry, to vent, and to clarify what you want and value in life. The most important thing is that you have a connection with your counsellor and know that they will listen to you and not judge.

What is Post-and Ante-Natal Distress (PND)?

The causes of PND are very diverse, and so are the feelings that result. Some people may experience 'low' feelings due to the strain on the person's relationship, while others may be experiencing irritability because they have too many demands and not enough support. Some people also find that extra stress can trigger unresolved fears and anxieties from the past. Likewise, some people may notice fear and panic associated with a traumatic birth. One consistency across people who experience PND is that the distress has been triggered by the change associated with a pregnancy, or a baby or babies, coming into the person's life.

One interesting theory is that PND comes about because the person is experiencing some sort of loss¹. For example, loss of career, loss of expectations, loss of support, loss of energy, loss of sleep, and loss of control. For someone who is used to a job they can control, it can be very difficult adapting to parenting a child who has their own ideas, especially in terms of sleep, mess, and noise! So for example, the loss of structure, and peace and quiet when you want it can easily lead to distress, unless we know how to adapt what we want and how we can get it.

¹ Anita Darrah (2011) '*The Distressing Case of Modern Mothering: Expectations, losses and Postnatal Distress*'. Thesis towards Doctor of Clinical Psychology, Massey University.

It's pretty common

To experience PND doesn't mean there is something 'wrong' with you as a person. For most people the symptoms are mild and temporary; and it's pretty common - around a third of the mothers you know have probably experienced some sort of distress. The stereotype that mothers who suffer from PND are dangerous and dysfunctional is uncommon; in contrast, most of the parents I've worked with² are high-functioning people who:

- are achievement driven and/or career focused
- put a lot of pressure on themselves to be/appear 'perfect', rather than showing vulnerability
- prefer structure and find it difficult to accept and adapt to change
- had/have high expectations about life with a baby
- lack support and/or find it difficult to ask for/accept support
- put others before themselves
- are independent, may be the eldest of their siblings.

So there is nothing to be ashamed of if you are finding things tough, you are OK and it's OK to get some extra support during this time. If you do feel unsafe though, it's important to get to your doctor right away.

How can I manage PND?

At PND Wellington we are working with other community organisations such as Plunket and Parents Centres to help break down those old stereotypes and stigmas that get in the way of a person acquiring the support that they'd really benefit from. There are lots of self-help tools and techniques but I'm a firm believer that humans tend to learn best from another human - this is where therapy and counselling comes in! Counselling helps to develop the skills to decipher what it is *you* want in life and how *you* can go about it.

What can PND Wellington offer you?

It can be tricky finding a counsellor that fits for you. PND Wellington can help narrow down your search, as our counsellors are selected on the basis of their training and their experience and/or interest in PND. All of our counsellors adhere to the NZ Association of Counsellors (NZAC) Code of Ethics, which is about protecting your safety and privacy, amongst other things.

We offer counselling to any parent who is experiencing difficulty adapting to life with a child, or to the prospect of it (either planning or pregnant). We have several student Counsellors who are either in their second or third year of their Counselling training. PND Wellington also has me - I'm a fully qualified

² This may just reflect the clientele at PND Wellington, so cannot be generalised to a wider population.

Counsellor and I am a full member of the NZAC (this means that the Counsellor has completed sufficient training, cultural, and professional development).

Our student Counsellors are dotted around various venues in Wellington/Hutt/Johnsonville and I am available in Johnsonville and Porirua. Our counselling is either free or low-cost; charges vary slightly depending on your counsellor. Antoinette, will discuss your options with you when you call, on 04 4723135.

A word from the author...

I am Emma Heaney-Yeatts, PND Wellington's Lead Counsellor and Extension Manager. I am a fully qualified Counsellor and I also have an honours degree in Education. I chose to work in the PND field because of my own experience of struggling to adapt to life with my second child who had allergies and reflux issues. Now that I can reflect back on that time in my life, I can see the huge amount of personal growth and development that has come of it. Although, at the time I really wanted someone to talk to - I tried talking to my midwife but she had another job to do! There was no dedicated PND service in the place I was living.

Wellington is so fortunate to have a free/low cost counselling service for parents who are finding it difficult to adapt to pregnancy, or life with a baby. You may or may not identify with the term PND, it does not matter, our service will have something that suits you.

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